THE MEANING OF METHODISM

BY
HERBERT E. ROWE

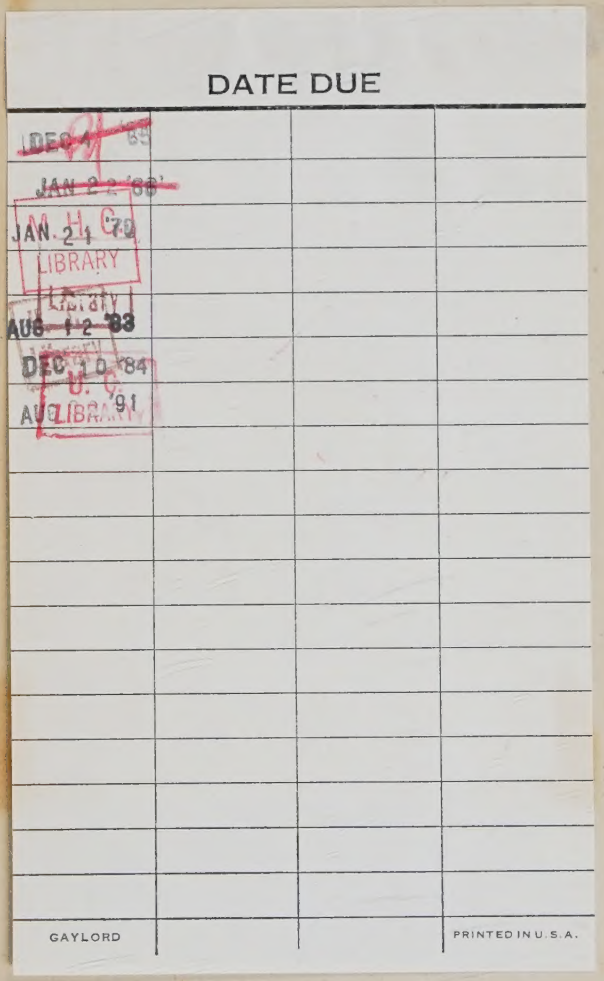
BRARY
6027*

MORRIS HARVEY COLLEGE
CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

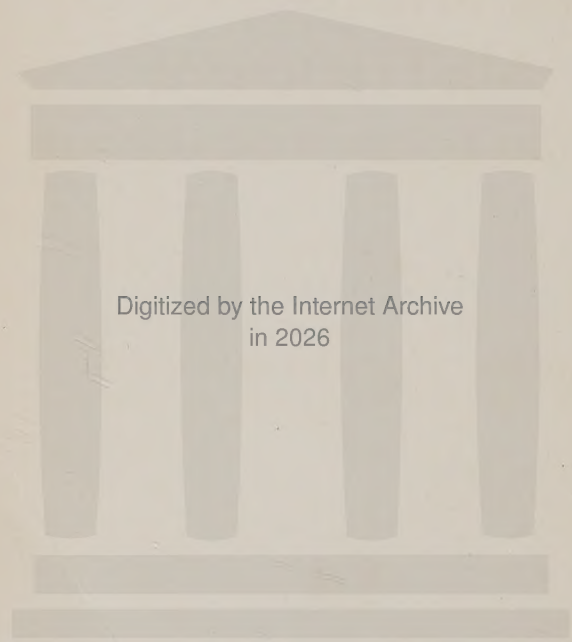
ANDREW S. THOMAS
MEMORIAL LIBRARY

CALL NUMBER
287
R79m

ACCESSION
5296


DATE DUE
DEC 4 '85
JAN 2 2 '86
JAN. 2 1 '70
LIBRARY
AUG 1 2 '83
DEC 10 '84
AUG '91
GAYLORD
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

THE MEANING OF METHODISM



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/meaningofmethodi0000gilb_z5w7

TRAINING COURSES FOR LEADERSHIP
E. B. CHAPPELL, D.D., EDITOR

THE MEANING OF METHODISM

A STUDY IN CHRISTIAN RELIGION

BY
GILBERT T. ROWE, D.D., LITT.D.
BOOK EDITOR OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH; EDITOR OF THE "METHODIST QUARTERLY REVIEW"

DISCARD

NASHVILLE, TENN.
COKESBURY PRESS
1926

COPYRIGHT, 1926
BY
LAMAR & BARTON

287
R79m

Printed in the United States of America

To

MY WIFE

Pearle Bostian Rowe

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	The Essence of Christianity	13
II.	Christianity and Sacramentalism	28
III.	Christianity and Institutionalism	43
IV.	Christianity and Intellectualism	58
V.	The Religion of the Spirit	76
VI.	Experienced Salvation	92
VII.	Standards of Doctrine	108
VIII.	The Functional Test	127
IX.	The Primary Theology of Methodism	146
X.	Obligations of Church Membership	166
XI.	Scholarship and Science	188
XII.	Methodism and Progress	210

PREFACE

THIS book contains the substance of extemporaneous lectures delivered before classes in "The Spirit and Genius of Methodism" at Summer Schools for Preachers and Christian Workers held at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Tex., Birmingham Southern College, Birmingham, Ala., Columbia College, Columbia, S. C., and Emory and Henry College, Emory, Va. It is written in compliance with requests from classes and individuals that the lectures which were heard by them be made available in printed form, and also in response to a desire, expressed by the Sunday School Editor, the Director of Religious Training of the Sunday School Board, and the Manager of Pastors' Schools for the Board of Missions, that the series be put into a book which might be of service to other teachers and classes engaged in the same line of study.

Methodism is a phenomenon in the religious world that cannot fail to arrest the attention of thoughtful minds. Springing up as a tender plant in a recent time, it has grown into a great tree, with its roots firmly embedded in the soil of the abiding hopes of humanity and its branches interlaced with the growths of the centuries. It has been the purpose of the author to look upon this phenomenon with an impartial eye and to endeavor to understand its meaning. He has not intended to write as a propagandist or to glorify his own denomination, and if he should seem at times to take too kindly a view, the reader will remember

that "the personal equation" must be reckoned with in the most sincere attempt to reach the objective disinterestedness of scientific observation.

Since it is impossible to understand the nature and significance of any movement or institution without a knowledge of its history, background, and association, it has been necessary in getting at the meaning of Methodism to consider its relation to other religious movements and organizations. At least three of the chapters present Methodism in direct contrast with Roman Catholicism, and there is scarcely a page that lies entirely beyond the shadow of the most venerable and impressive organization in human history. In plain justice to truth this had to be done. But the writer has not intended or desired to arouse a feeling of intolerance or to stir the smoldering fires of religious persecution. As impossible as it may be for many, there are still millions of people who demand a religion of external authority, and people of this mind have a perfect right to worship God according to the dictates of a conscience which looks to the papacy for infallible guidance in faith and morals. Protestants have not yet fully learned the great lessons of religious liberty and the right of "private judgment." They need to ponder the remark of the president of a great university, "We no longer burn 'heretics'—we 'fire' them."

The standpoint of the writer is frankly and thoroughly Christian. He describes the temple of Christian truth, as he sees it from the inside, and not as it might be viewed by one who looked upon it from without and never entered its sacred doors. Every great truth

laid down in the book has been put to the test in his own experience. And he is profoundly convinced that in the Christian religion the revelation of the Deity reaches the point of finality. No one can desire or conceive of a better or more desirable object of worship and confidence than the God "who is the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

His standpoint is just as frankly Methodist. In choosing the subtitle, "A Study in Christian Religion," he means to imply that the "fundamental tendency" of Methodism is identical with that of Christianity. Of course, he would not claim that everything that Methodism has ever taught or practiced has been in entire harmony with the highest truth, but he does mean to say that it is always the purpose of Methodism to hold every view subject to the correction of the Holy Spirit. In identifying Methodism with Christianity, he does not mean to say that this Church has a monopoly of Christian religion. He only claims that it is the greatest and best organized expression of Christianity, because it makes creeds and forms secondary and finds the essence of all true religion in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Any other Church that is willing to surrender its sectarian elements may do the same thing.

There is always a need for books of this kind. The truths of religion tend, on the one hand, to lose their vitality by becoming so conventionalized, standardized, and institutionalized that the individual ceases to be concerned with them, and, on the other, to flatten out into a vague and characterless religiosity in which

the moral urgency of life's critical choices is ignored. The religion of the spirit "battles everywhere with authority, with the dogmas of infallibility and the dogmas of agnosticism, with the dogmas of arrogant assertion and the dogmas of confident denial." The only safety lies in constant readjustment by fresh recourse to God in the spirit of his well-beloved Son who "pleased not himself," and was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Since the writer has kept in mind the general reader rather than the technical scholar, little effort has been made to indicate the source of his material. Most of the facts given are a part of the vast store of common knowledge, and the views expressed have been held by so many that it would be impossible to disentangle the threads and follow each strand to its proper source. There may not be an original thought in the book. In fact, when any man tries to recall the individuals who have fed his mental and spiritual life, he soon finds himself surrounded by "a great cloud of witnesses," and indebted to "a multitude that no man can number." There is not a Christian living whose life has not been affected by the fact that Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went."

The author feels deeply grateful for the sympathetic interest that the above-mentioned classes took in the course and ventures the hope that those who read the book will have a better understanding and a higher appreciation of Methodism.

NASHVILLE, TENN., MARCH 19, 1926.

CHAPTER I

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

Always and everywhere people are in great need. Whether the observer looks back into history or casts his eye over the world of the present day, he is driven to the conclusion that the whole human race is in a pitiable plight. Man has never been at home in the realm of nature, and he has not been able to make his way to the home of the soul. Creature comforts do not satisfy the human heart. In the midst of the abundance provided by the scientific knowledge of a highly developed civilization no less than in the midst of the poverty of savage tribes, there is a pathetic hunger for a kind of food that the world cannot provide. Whether crops are short or plentiful, "there is famine in the land."

Many people, not realizing that this uneasiness is caused by the pressure of an eternal world upon the soul, move feverishly from one experience to another in the hope of finding the satisfaction that they crave. They spend their money for that which does not satisfy. But no earthly good can meet this universal need of man, because God hath set eternity in his heart; and because man was not intended to be merely the crown of nature and the paragon of the animal world, there is in him an unutterable longing for participation in the life of God. "Thou hast made us for thyself, O God," said Augustine, "and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in thee." It is

written both in the Bible and in the constitution of the human soul that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The gospel was designed to meet this need. It is God's answer to man's desire to share the divine life. Immediately after his return from the scene of the temptation in the wilderness "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When he visited the synagogue at Nazareth, he read from Isaiah a passage containing the statement, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor"; and after sitting down he began his message by saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The messengers from John were told to carry word back to the imprisoned prophet that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them." But Jesus did not confine his ministry to any one class or condition of men. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The gospel as Jesus preached it was not cryptic or recondite or hard to understand. The worldly-wise and sophisticated could not see its import, because they would not, but all who felt their need and were humble enough to open their hearts to God could receive the gospel and be saved by its power.

What bread is to the body the word of God is to the soul, and the need of food for the body is no more universal than the need of spiritual sustenance for the soul. Therefore, the message of Jesus was intended,

not merely for the people to whom he spoke, or for the race to which he belonged, or for the age in which he lived his earthly life, but for all races and ages to the end of time. When the gospel was still utterly despised by the Jews and rejected by them as a slander upon God and all his holy prophets, and before it had scarcely made a dent in the world's civilization, or come to the notice of the mighty empire which it was at last to overturn, apostles were preaching it as the universal gospel, and evangelists were deliberately recording utterances of Jesus which implied that he knew of a certainty that he had brought the word of life necessary to meet the whole world's need. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world." "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

The spread of Christianity has often been used as an argument for its truthfulness, and this argument has weight. However, other religions have also spread over vast areas with remarkable rapidity, and the same argument may be used with effect by Mohammedans and Buddhists. But when Jesus Christ declared that the gospel would spread through the whole world and endure throughout the ages, he displayed a knowledge of truth and of human nature nothing short of divine; and when the writers of the Gospels recorded these utterances while the Church was still

an insignificant handful of people, compared with the vast numbers who were knit together in determined opposition, they gave testimony to a realization of the fact that the gospel is so utterly true to all who have been saved by it that this conviction is neither diminished by a temporary decline in the number of adherents nor increased by widespread popularity. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Jesus knew that the gospel was the hope of the world, and he expected his followers to make it their chief aim to preach it to all mankind.

The Church has been carrying on its work for nearly two thousand years, and its record of achievement is such that no other organization or institution has even remotely approached it in bringing good to the world. Old civilizations have had their youth renewed, barbarous nations have been tamed, and millions of men and women have been saved from bondage to sin, superstition, and selfishness, rescued from despair, and inspired with a sure hope of immortal life. But many other millions have lived and died without the hope and comfort that only the gospel can give. There are now living vast numbers of people who have never heard of Jesus Christ, and many who have been born and reared in the very midst of a Christian civilization have no conception of the real meaning of the gospel message. After all due allowance has been made for the vastness of the task that was to be accomplished, the feeling cannot be escaped that the progress of the gospel has not been what it should have been. It has not been what Jesus might have expected it to be.

Two enormous obstacles have stood in the way. The first is quite obvious because it is met with in the experience of every person who undertakes to live the Christian life. This obstacle is the natural inclination of the human heart. The gospel proposes the most radical transformation that has ever been suggested to the mind of man. It demands that the law of selfishness shall give way to the law of unselfishness, that self-indulgence shall be supplanted by self-devotion, that pride shall give way to humility, and that all desires and aims shall be consistent with the righteousness of God. It is easy enough to see that Christianity requires this. All Christians know that this is true, but many are unwilling to let the gospel have free course in their hearts and lives.

The second obstacle is a persistent, determined, and widely prevalent misunderstanding of what Christianity really is. Very early in its history the Church not only lost sight of the heart of the gospel, but began with unabated zeal to lay supreme emphasis upon things that were only incidentally connected with the gospel or not connected with it at all. The voices of the apostles were scarcely stilled in death before pagan influences began to affect the thought and life of Christianity, and within three hundred years of the Great Commission the Church strayed away into unchristian paths. This deplorable and disastrous misunderstanding continued and deepened for more than a thousand years and persists even to this day.

In every century, and especially since the Reformation, men have been earnestly grappling with the ques-

tion, What is the essence of Christianity? In attempting to get at the right answer it will help to keep clearly in mind the object to be attained. If we can certainly know what the gospel is intended to do, and actually does, we may be sure that everything in Christianity that is necessary in accomplishing this object is essential, and that whatever has no direct bearing on the object in view cannot be more than incidental. In other words, whatever it takes to make a Christian man and a Christianized world is of the essence of Christianity.

What, then, is the object of the gospel? It is to free men from bondage to sin and fear and put them in peaceful communion with God and in love and fellowship with one another. When this object has been achieved in any man's life, when he has ceased to be victimized by sin and fear, and is living in peaceful confidence in God and in fellowship with his neighbor, it may certainly be said of that man that he is a Christian.

Now, there is just one thing that will produce such an effect, and that is the possession of a Christlike mind. The sure way to make a bad man good is to get him to share the mind of Christ. The sure way to make a good man better is to get him to have more of that mind. The whole purpose of the gospel is to produce Christlike people. All doctrines, rites, and methods must be tested by this object. Whatever interferes with it is unchristian, whatever neither helps nor hinders is accidental, whatever derives its power to be of help from the taste or preference of

the individual is incidental, and whatever directly produces that result is essential to the gospel message. There are many theories about religion, and men disagree over speculative questions, but there can be no doubt that essential Christian religion is having the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Dr. George H. Means relates an incident that occurred in the Kentucky mountains about fifty years ago, as it was given him by one of the ministers involved. When a protracted meeting was in progress a committee was appointed to wait on one Craig Tolliver and invite him to get religion, be baptized, and join the Church. Now, Tolliver is described as a cruel and dreaded desperado, with a bad record for killing men, fearing neither God, man, nor devil. The committee found the old man approachable, and the invitation drew from him the response: "Yes, I reckon if there is anything Tol needs it is religion. Everybody says so, and I guess it's a fact."

The committee, agreeably surprised at this frank confession, listened with increasing interest as the prospective convert continued: "But the trouble is that nobody can tell me what religion is and how to get it. The Presbyterians had a meeting here, and they talked a great deal about election, and I guess that is all right. I don't know anything about it. Of course I would like for God to vote for me, and that is all I know about it. Then the Methodists had a meeting here, and they shouted and kept up an awful fuss, but the shouting didn't help me any. What I want to know is, what religion is and how to get it. Now,

you folks (the committee was from a Church of the denomination commonly known as Campbellites) say, if I go into the river and be baptized, I will get religion, and then I will know what it is. Now that is plain. I can understand that, and I have made up my mind to do it. But mark my words. If Craig Tolliver goes down into that old muddy creek and comes up out of thar and ain't got no religion, you had better take to the woods."

"Bob," Dr. Means asked the preacher who was telling him the story, "did you baptize him?"

"I did not," was the prompt reply.

"Why not? That is your theory."

"Well," answered the preacher, "you know theories don't always pan out in practice."

There seemed to be doubt whether the leopard would actually be changed by being put under the water. But it would have been safe to assure even Craig Tolliver that he could be saved by repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For faith in Jesus opens the heart to his Spirit, and it is not real faith unless it does.

No doubt many other things are connected with Christianity. The spirit of Jesus Christ will lead the Christian on to enrichment in all knowledge, and wisdom, and imagination, and to surprisingly varied experiences in things that pertain to the religious life. Fellowship with God will stimulate the mind to think about God and there will be a continued effort to state the truth in systematic form. There will be symbols which present spiritual truth through analogy, as

familiar facts in the visible world are used to make more intelligible the invisible realities of the spiritual world. Conscious communion with God in the spirit will bring individual Christians together in public worship, and there will be rites and ceremonies which will help to unify minds and hearts and express the common devotion. But only the mind of Christ can give value to systems of thought and to religious forms and practices. The spirit of Jesus is the *sine qua non* of all Christian religion.

Paul was the most marvelous theologian of all the centuries. He aimed to bring every thought, whether practical or speculative, into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He was also acquainted with all experiences, both normal and abnormal, that grew out of contact of the soul with God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. He thanks God that he talked with tongues more than all the volatile Corinthians. In only one thing was Paul greater than in theology. He was a greater Christian than he was a theologian. And it would have been impossible for him to be a great theologian if he had not been a great Christian, for the first qualification for thinking truly about divine things is an experience of salvation.

Now, this mighty missionary and chief interpreter of Christianity wrote some things that are hard to be understood. But he is perfectly clear when he undertakes to say what Christianity really is. He indicates the characteristic mark of a Christian with such definiteness that it is impossible to mistake his meaning. Negatively, he says, "If any man have not the Spirit

of Christ, he is none of his." A man may belong to the Church, he may regulate his life by approved rules of conduct, he may diligently perform all tasks assigned to him, he may be skilled in doctrinal definition, but if he lacks the Spirit of Jesus, he is not a Christian. Positively, Paul says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." In the Greek, "having the mind" is expressed by one word, a verb, and it means to think, or to feel. The apostle is urging the Philippians to think and feel like Jesus Christ. Let this mind, this animus, this disposition, this spirit, be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. In the midst of an elaborate discussion of spiritual gifts, Paul bursts out in a wonderful prose poem, in which he declares that nothing can take the place of the love that is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ.

The gospel preached by Paul is essentially the same as the gospel of Jesus. Jesus summed up all law and prophecy in the great commandment of love, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." He says that he came not to destroy, but to fulfill, and in his own life he did fulfill to the uttermost the law of love. The very essence of true religion is to respond in kind to the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ and to share with God his love for all mankind. The Golden Rule was given by Jesus for guidance in the practical application of the principle of neighborly love.

What Jesus himself did he expects every Christian also to do. "If any man will [*i. e.* choose to] come

after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." He who would be called a disciple of Jesus must deny himself as Jesus did, take up his cross as Jesus did, and follow in his steps. The motive that controlled the heart of the Saviour must also control the hearts of the saved. This is only another way of saying that a Christian must have the spirit of Jesus Christ.

No man ever tried more earnestly to find out what Christianity really is than John Wesley; and after many years of patient study and hard struggle he was able through experience to understand the gospel as preached by Jesus and interpreted by Paul. Growing up in an age of religious indifference, moral laxity, formalism, and doctrinal controversy, he deliberately set about the task of separating between the wheat and the chaff so that he might be able to see for himself and to tell other men the true way to God. His devotion and diligence were richly rewarded. He not only saw clearly what was required in order that he himself might be a Christian, but he was also able to present gospel truth with such simplicity and directness that the wayfaring man could understand and be saved by it.

Many times John Wesley asked the question, "What is it to be a Christian?" And he always answered it in some such way as, "It is having the mind of Christ; it is walking as he walked; it is no more nor less than loving God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself." In describing his attitude as a Methodist toward other Christians, he said:

I will not quarrel with you about any mere opinion. Only see that your heart be right toward God; that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbor and walk as your Master walked; and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions; I am weary to hear them. My soul loathes this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion; give me an humble and gentle lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul be with these Christians, whosoever they are, and whatsoever opinion they are of.

As soon as Wesley entered into an experience of conscious salvation through fellowship with God in the spirit of Jesus Christ he felt a divine call to carry the good news of such an experience to his fellow man. The mission of Methodism as he defined it was "to spread scriptural holiness through these lands," and he meant by "scriptural holiness" the quality of life in the apostolic Church which enabled ordinary men and women to overcome sin and the world and to live according to the mind of Christ. His aim was to restore primitive Christianity, not by imitating its forms of organization or adopting the frame work of its thought, but by reproducing the apostolic experience of salvation.

Methodism is, as Chalmers said, "Christianity in earnest." It is the most persistent and successful attempt that has ever been made to separate between the essential and the unessential, to concentrate upon the essence of the Christian religion, and to emphasize the characteristic marks of a Christian. Having learned through experience that possession of the Spirit

of Jesus is salvation, it intends to allow nothing to interfere with or obscure this truth. Its aim is to acquaint people with the gospel that makes for pure religion without prefix or suffix and to lay upon men no requirement in doctrine or practice that does not derive its authority from the Spirit of Christ.

This is the only way out of ecclesiastical bigotry, denominational narrowness, and doctrinal intolerance. The only power that can unify the Christian Church is the Spirit of Jesus. In the providence of God, Methodism has been called to lead out along this line. But while there is cause for rejoicing, there is no excuse for denominational pride. Methodism has been saved from many of the erroneous interpretations that have attended Christianity and gained a footing in other Churches because it came into existence after other ways had been tried and found wanting. Coming late in the history of Christianity, it was able to profit by the experience of other Churches. Weary with futile quarrels over ecclesiastical claims and confessional definitions, the world was ready to be called back to pure religion and to hear of the simplicity that is in Christ.

The most hopeful feature of the religious thought of the world at the present time is the enormously accelerated trend toward a recognition of the fact that the only sure promise of peace and brotherhood is in the spirit of Jesus. When Paul saw the hard and fast lines that separated between races and nations, he declared that the purpose of God revealed in the gospel was to transcend all differences by making a new type

of man in Christ Jesus. That is to say, the Jew and Gentile would no longer treat each other with contempt when both caught the spirit of Jesus Christ. But the Jew persecuted the early Church, and when the Church became dominant in the world it in turn persecuted the Jew. The Church itself in course of time divided into mutually hostile organizations, each producing a creed that separated it from all others, and the Jew went on his way attempting to worship the God of his fathers. Now, it is certain that Protestantism will never be converted to the creed of Roman Catholicism and that Roman Catholicism will never be converted to any one of the great creeds of Protestantism. It is equally certain that the Jew will never accept either Roman Catholicism or creedal Protestantism. All organizations resist and resent all proselytizing efforts on the part of any other organization.

But there is one thing that people cannot resist, and that is the gentle, loving, self-effacing, self-denying spirit of Jesus Christ. And that spirit is now stirring in the hearts of many in a surprising and encouraging way. Among the Jews, for instance, many scholars are reverently studying the life of Jesus of Nazareth and claiming him as a great prophet of Israel. In a large Southern city the director of religious education in a Methodist Church is also director of religious education in the leading Jewish synagogue. Thank God, the leaven is at work in Israel. Who can doubt that the movement in the Reformed Synagogue is of God?

The same Spirit is stirring the hearts of the people of

Oriental nations. Just as missionaries were beginning to despair of seeing the world converted to European and American forms of Christianity, they became aware of a profound and widespread desire among all non-Christian nations to know Jesus Christ and enter into his spirit. The one man who commands the respect of the millions of India to-day is Gandhi, and Gandhi is revered and loved because he reveals in his thought and conduct the sacrificial spirit of Jesus. There is little reason for thinking that the forms of Christianity prevalent in Europe and America will be duplicated in India or China, or that Western civilization will ever be accepted in the Orient. Students in those lands are saying, "We do not want your commercialism, we do not care for your civilization, we are not interested in your philosophy—tell us what you know of Jesus." "Give us Jesus, just Jesus," was the earnest plea of a Hindu, expressed to Dr. E. Stanley Jones. "Do not be afraid that we will make a human Jesus out of him, for his divinity will shine out of its own accord." Dr. Jones asked another Hindu what he thought of Christ. "There is no one who is seriously bidding for the heart of the world except Jesus Christ; there is no one else in the field," was the reply. This great missionary, whose recent visit to the homeland inspired the Church with fresh hope and courage, feels that Jesus is making his way into the heart of the Orient. "I find him," he says, "in places and movements I had never dreamed of, and by the quiet sense of his presence he is forcing modification everywhere."

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIANITY AND SACRAMENTALISM

THE first great misinterpretation of Christianity was sacramentalism. When the Church turned into this blind alley, it forsook the principle of salvation by faith for salvation by magic.

Faith is a moral act. It is the reasonable response of the soul to a credible word of God. It is necessary for salvation because it connects the soul with the power that saves. God does not arbitrarily require faith as a previous condition to be met before he is willing to save. Faith is simply the act of receiving what God has to give. It is not in itself a power; it is the connection between the soul and power. Therefore, when faith in a gracious God is regarded as the one condition of salvation, religion becomes intelligible and fits into the whole realm of reality.

It is the nature of magic to produce effects which have no necessary or logical relation to the cause. Just to the extent to which the world admits magic, it becomes unintelligible, fanciful, and unreal. Where effects are unrelated to causes, the same cause might produce one effect at one time and another at another, and scientific knowledge, upon which all reasonable action depends, becomes impossible. When religion asserts that God has arbitrarily ordained that causes shall be followed by effects which have no logical connection with them, it withdraws into a region of fancy and rejects the method by which all knowledge must be

acquired. Faith leads to a continual increase of knowledge, but magic destroys the possibility of knowledge.

When Browning speaks in one of his poems of the careless repetition of a form of words, which, spoken in a certain way, would explode the sun, he is alluding to an ancient belief in the power of a magical formula. When the belief in demon possession was widely prevalent, the approved method for ridding the victim of his unwelcome guest was exorcism. The demon would take his flight as soon as he heard the mysterious words of the exorcising formula uttered in the proper way. There was no more connection between the cause and the effect than between the crowing of the cock and the coming of the dawn. A religion that relies upon magic belongs in the same class with Alice in Wonderland.

Sacramentalism is that interpretation of Christianity which attaches supreme importance to the sacraments. The sacramentalist believes that the true Church is distinguished from all spurious imitations by the possession of a priesthood which is miraculously qualified to baptize and to celebrate the Holy Communion. He regards baptism as the act by which a soul is transplanted from the realm of nature into the kingdom of grace, and the Lord's Supper as the center of worship and the necessary means of spiritual nourishment. When baptism is properly administered, the very texture of the soul is supposed to be changed. There is infused into it a divine quality which makes it radically different in nature from the unbaptized and insures it a place among the redeemed. When the bread and

wine are blessed by a qualified priest, they are changed into the body and blood of the risen Saviour, and the divine substance is eaten by the communicant.

Sacramentalism is salvation by physical miracle. It is a total departure from the religion of the New Testament, and from the rational world, in which effects are always related in kind to their causes. It is essentially nonmoral and magical. There is no necessary connection between water and salvation, or between bread and wine and spiritual nourishment; and if these things actually bring salvation, it can only be because God has arbitrarily decreed that this shall be the way of salvation. But in that case faith gives way to mere credulity, and there is nothing to do but to accept the unproved and untested claim of the Roman Catholic hierarchy that God has miraculously revealed to it the truth which all must unquestioningly receive and obey. Jesus appeals to the judgment of his hearers. Isaiah represents God as saying, "Come now, and let us reason together." Paul never tries to compel men to believe or act in a way contrary to their convictions. But sacramentalism deliberately removes religion from the rational world and places it in a world of unreason. Whatever significance baptism may have, it cannot change the quality of the soul, if physical effects follow physical causes and moral and spiritual effects moral and spiritual causes. If that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, then that which is born of water is water.

By the close of the third century sacramentalism

had become the prevailing type of Christianity, and it held undisputed sway for more than a thousand years. What was the source of this great perversion? It did not come from the New Testament. There is scarcely a trace of it in apostolic Christianity. Sacramentalism was taken over by the Church from the mystery religions. These religions poured in from the mystic East, from Egypt, and Persia, and other countries, and spread rapidly over the Roman Empire. They abounded in strange rites and ceremonies, which were intended to raise the candidate from the perishable world into immortal life, and came in answer to a widespread craving for personal salvation. Each one of these religions had a god who was supposed to impart immortality to the devotee through some kind of baptism or sacramental meal. The baptism in some religions was by water and in others by blood. In the rite of Cybele it was the taurobolium. The candidate was placed beneath the animal, and as the warm blood of the bull flowed down upon him through the iron grating he believed that he was mysteriously changed into the nature of his accepted deity. These mystery religions were the real rivals of Christianity and threatened to supplant the old religion of Rome. In the middle of the third century it was still doubtful whether the future belonged to Mithras or Christ; and though Christianity came out victorious, the vanquished religion took vengeance by imparting its cardinal principle to the conqueror. Dr. John Alfred Faulkner says:

After the fourth century it was a common custom to clothe the newly baptized and anointed with a white linen garment, which was worn during the Easter week and put off in a solemn way. Anrich gives numerous instances of a like custom among the heathen and in the mysteries, but it is hard to say whether it was directly borrowed from them or arose from the same impulse of symbolism. Other heathen customs, like the crowning of the head or tying a fillet around the forehead, holding in the hand a burning handkerchief or torch, were used both in Church and mysteries. This is true also of offering the neophyte a mixture of barley and milk. Baptism given only at night, preceded by abstinence and fasting, the assembled Church watching all Easter night, church strangely illuminated at times on these occasions by clever means, the service itself held a secret, the unbaptized strictly prohibited from entering the baptistery, the candidates not allowed to enter until they have gone through certain "holy" transactions on the porch, the solemn procession of lights—everything in connection with baptism, perhaps more so with the Eucharist—was calculated to impress all concerned with the fact that Christianity need not bow to paganism, or Eleusis, or Isis, or Mithras so far as mystery is concerned. Yes, as Israel the Egyptians, so the ancient Catholic Church had despoiled the heathen.

Primitive Christianity was not indebted to the mystery religions. It was derived from two mighty sources—*viz.*, the Hebrew religion, including Judaism, and Jesus Christ. It practiced two simple symbolic rites, baptism, which was a familiar Jewish custom, and the Lord's Supper, which succeeded the Passover meal. The first was an outward and visible act to indicate an inward and invisible effect of the Spirit of God upon the soul, while the second was a solemn communal feast which symbolized the fellowship of Christians with one another and with their crucified

and risen Lord. These rites furnished the occasion for sacramentalism, which finally clothed them with meanings derived from the mystery religions. It is true that the apostles used the language of the time, and that Paul seems at times to attach a mystical significance to the sacraments, but it is equally true that Paul and all other New Testament writers make Christianity hinge upon faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. In "Paul of Tarsus"* Dr. T. R. Glover disposes of the view that primitive Christianity shared the sacramentalism of the mystery religions in the following words:

> In the New Testament there is language which, taken by itself, is more or less susceptible of such an interpretation, but there is far more that is not. Nobody so far has alleged that Jesus held any such position and it is assumed that the change to another basis altogether from the standpoint of Jesus was the work of Paul as much as of any one; Paul thus becomes the man who has corrupted our religion and brought us away from Jesus. A man's language is a guide to his character, but his character is the background against which his language has to be interpreted. Paul was a Jew, and he lived first among the enemies of Jesus and then among his friends, and he is to be credited with some intelligence, some clearness, and some gift of centripetal emphasis. Can it be seriously urged that his emphasis, broad and long, is sacramental, when, as Reitzenstein admits, he never refers to his own baptism—when the sacrament is for him the Lord's Supper, and he does not use of it the language of the fourth Gospel, never hints at "eating the flesh and drinking the blood" (which was in some instances the essence of the heathen mystery meal), never but in one doubtful place hints at "the belief in the marvelous virtue of sacred food, whether

*George H. Doran Company, publishers, New York.

for weal or woe"—when he never gets near a phrase like that of Ignatius, "medicine of immortality and antidote of death"—when in setting forth to the Romans his conception of Christianity he mentions baptism once, and the Lord's Supper not at all—when he boasts for the moment to the Corinthians and thanks God that, one or two excepted, he had baptized none of them? Is that the language of a sacramentalist, of Cyprian or of any modern disciple of Cyprian? Why is not the sacramental position made clearer in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse and the letters of St. John—waiving the broad hint of the evangelist that spirit and not flesh is what matters—or in the "Didache," or even the Epistle of James? The Epicurean in Cicero's book says: "When we call grain Ceres and wine Liber, we just use a common style of speech, but do you think that anybody is so silly as to suppose that what he eats is God?" The commentator notes that no ancient enemy of the Church brought this taunt against it. (What the Christians were accused of was eating real babies.) Clement concludes that the Lord's Supper cannot be derived, even collaterally or by way of supplement, from pagan sources; and that the ideas in the New Testament which are *perhaps* derived from non-Jewish sources lie on the fringe of Christianity and do not touch its vital essence.

The hold of sacramentalism was weakened by the Renaissance and broken by the Reformation. The former was an effort to recover what was admirable and beautiful in the Greek and Roman civilization, while the latter was an earnest attempt to break away from the artificial salvation offered through priestcraft to real salvation obtained by direct access to God. Martin Luther sought personal salvation above all things. He had been properly baptized, he received the sacrament regularly at the hands of ordained priests, but he was not saved until he went directly to God and trusted in his grace.

The thing that gave sacramentalism its deathblow was the scientific method. When men turned from speculation to observation and experiment as the means by which truth is to be acquired, every statement that could not stand this test was doomed to be rejected. The whole world has learned that the law of cause and effect must be recognized, if progress in knowledge is to be made, and it allows of no exception. If, therefore, the truth proclaimed by the Church expects to be considered by a scientific age, it must welcome an examination of the effect which it has upon life. But the moment the Church begins to explain its doctrines and to show their reasonableness, it opens the way for the destruction of every artificial and unreal claim. It may continue to assert that bread and wine are mysteriously changed into body and blood through the consecrating act of the priest and that these elements of food produce a magical spiritual effect; but since the effects claimed have no logical connection with the cause, the scientific mind cannot admit the assertion. As the disinterested investigator considers the consecrated wine, he will say: "It looks like wine; it tastes like wine; any test to which it may be subjected shows that it retains every quality which it had before and reveals no additional quality; it can be defined only as wine; it *is* wine."

And yet sacramentalism persists to an enormous extent. It is the type of Christianity that prevails in the largest Christian organization in the world. Christendom is divided mainly by the evangelical and the sacramental interpretation of the Christian re-

ligion. For the former, religion and worship center in faith; for the latter, in the sacraments. For millions of men and women the miracle of transubstantiation is still real, and the essence of worship is found in the bloodless sacrifice upon the altar. For them there is no access to God except through the mediating priest, and they leave the Church after mass with the firm conviction that they have seen the body and blood of Jesus Christ offered up and partaken of in their behalf.

During the war ten thousand Russian soldiers were captured and imprisoned in Germany. Every effort to lead them in worship was vain, because no minister present was qualified to administer the sacrament in the proper way. Finally, the workers sent to Russia for bread and wine which had been consecrated by a priest of the Orthodox Church, and as these elements were eaten tears of joy flowed down ten thousand reverent and happy faces. The soldiers really believed that they were receiving God in the form of bread and wine and that they could commune with him in no other way.

There is a strong "Catholic" party in the Established Church of England. A member of this group, Dr. John T. Darragh, of Johannesburg, South Africa, has recently written a book on "The Resurrection of the Flesh," in which he earnestly contends that there can be no true Christianity without the celebration of the mass. A few quotations from this book will set forth the sacramentalist's claim. After stating that the Protestant Confessions throw no light upon the

question of the resurrection of the body, but "simply repeat at its dullest the teachings of the Schoolmen," whom he regards as far below the early Fathers, he thus declares that the least of the Roman Catholics are greater than the greatest of the Protestants:

> They, however, always presupposed an acquaintance with the more balanced teaching of the Fathers. Above all they were saved from the worst effects of their partial treatment of the subject by their familiarity in theory and practice with the only risen human Body that yet exists—*viz.*, that which sits at the right hand of God, and yet is present sacramentally on ten thousand altars, and is really and truly given to and received by myriads of communicants, the Bush that ever burns and is never consumed. Christ's Apostle declares that he will fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things to himself (Phil. 3: 21). Those who were used first to adore and then to receive the glorified Body of the Lord knew that it had passed beyond our limitations of time and place and sense. All their language about the risen body was necessarily conditioned by this ineffable spiritual experience. . . .
>
> Alas! this double index to the interpretation of their language about the resurrection of the body was blurred or entirely lacking amongst the continental Reformers. It was their boast that they attached little or no importance to the patristic tradition, and even when, as in the Lutheran Confessions, there remained more or less clear echoes of Eucharistic teaching, they gradually lost the few priests who had been commissioned to consecrate the Eucharist. So the formal teaching of their standards became a dead letter.

This author believes that, while there have been differences among theologians with regard to the philosophical explanations of "the mystery of that Pres-

ence," there have never been any differences among real Christians concerning the fact itself.

Those who deprecate attempts to define the manner of the Real Presence do not mean to question the truth of our Lord's words: *This is my Body.* This is a truth of faith verified continuously by succeeding generations of worshipers and communicants. After consecration it is by the power of the Holy Ghost no longer mere bread: it has become the Body of the Lord.

The great truth itself, built on the firm rock of the words of the Word made Flesh, believed in, tested, and verified in the life experience of myriads of Christians, is held as firmly to-day by more millions of every grade of life, of intellect and culture than ever before in the history of the world. Many of those whose forefathers forfeited that inestimable boon—the pitiful Redeemer have mercy—are feeling after the recovery of their lost inheritance.

This venerable priest of the Anglo-Catholic Church accurately states the sacramentalist's position. But when he declares that the doctrine of transubstantiation is "tested and verified" in life experience, he is using scientific language without scientific meaning. Any Catholic worshiper may testify that he experiences the peace and joy of fellowship with God at the celebration of the mass, but he may not infer from any feeling within himself that a miracle has taken place upon the altar. The ten thousand Russian prisoners attributed their spiritual uplift to the Real Presence, but if the bread and wine had not really been consecrated by a priest in Russia an unquestioning belief in a statement that they had been would have produced the same spiritual effects. The longing of thousands for a return to the credulous and unscientific religion of the Middle

Ages is pathetic, but Christianity has passed beyond the possibility of it forever. People cannot accept the repeated miracle of the mass, if they are to trust their senses and retain their reason.

Many pagan errors that entered the Roman Catholic Church as smallpox passed over in varioloid form into Protestantism. Though sacramentalism properly belongs to Rome with its miraculously constituted priesthood, it has been the source of many controversies among Protestant Churches. Strange to say, Martin Luther, the greatest of all the Reformers, forsook the principle of salvation by faith, upon which he staked the whole issue of the Reformation, in his interpretation of the sacrament. Unwilling to assent to the transubstantiation doctrine of the Church, he invented a compromising theory, which was called consubstantiation, and refused to recognize as Christians any who would not accept his theory. When he met Zwingli and other Reformers in a conference at Marburg in 1529 to talk over the differences among Protestants, he wrote with chalk a sentence upon the table by which they were sitting, and as the discussion of the sacrament went on he would point from time to time to the writing and say, "*Hoc est corpus meum.*" When Zwingli would suggest that these words might be taken to mean, "This represents, or typifies, my body," Luther would exclaim, "*Est, est, est.*" Though they were able to agree upon fourteen of the fifteen points under consideration, they could find no common ground upon which to stand in their interpretation of the Lord's Supper. "You do not belong to the communion of the

Christian Church: we cannot acknowledge you as brethren!" Luther declared, as he refused to shake hands with Zwingli at the close of the colloquy. "One or the other of us must be a minister of Satan!" Think of it! The combined political and ecclesiastical power of the world standing by the cradle of Protestantism seeking to throttle it in its infancy, and the great Reformers at hopeless odds over the proper way to celebrate the feast of sacrificial love!

John Wesley, brought up in the Church of England, carried to Georgia his sacramentalist views. While there, he refused the sacrament to a minister because he had not been baptized by a clergyman, and Wesley's conduct during this unenlightened period of his ministry supplied the ground for the charge that he was at heart a Roman Catholic. He did not give up his belief in baptismal regeneration until after his great experience of personal salvation. The Episcopal Church retains both the evangelical and the sacramental types of Christianity, but Methodism utterly rejected the sacramental interpretation and exerted a mighty influence toward strengthening the evangelical strain in the Church of England.

A Roman Catholic mother, who lived in a town where there was no priest, sent to a Methodist preacher and urged him to come in all possible haste and baptize her sick child. When the baptismal service was over, she said, with a sigh of relief, "Now, if my baby dies, he can see the face of God." She had been taught that all unbaptized children who die in infancy go to the *limbo infantum*, where they remain forever apart

from the divine presence. Every Methodist knows that that is not true. If a child is forever excluded from the presence of God for the lack of a few drops of water, there is neither sense nor reason in what Jesus said about the Father and it is utterly useless to try to think about God at all.

The Methodist Church retains and uses the sacraments, but it has never entertained any superstitious view of them, because it has been careful to ascertain their meaning through Christian experience and a study of the New Testament. It recognizes their symbolic significance and keeps them in their proper place by concentrating attention upon the thing symbolized. It is quite possible to have the thing symbolized without the symbol and the symbol without the thing symbolized. That is to say, one may be baptized with water without the inner baptism of the Spirit, and one may be cleansed within without bearing the outward sign of water baptism. Early Methodists were advised and urged to go to the Established Church for the sacrament, but they were required to attend class meeting, because it was seen that the class meeting was essential to the spiritual life of the members at that stage of the revival movement.

John Wesley was intent upon salvation, and he could not find it in the sacraments. He learned in the New Testament that baptism might precede, attend, or follow the consciousness of salvation, and both experience and observation taught him that the Lord's Supper was useless without faith.

The Church has been forced to the conclusion:

Sacraments do not save. A baptized Europe was not a Christian Europe. The whole world might become a baptized world, even as Europe was once a baptized continent, and be neither better nor worse. Every living person might partake of the Lord's Supper at regular intervals and yet be unsaved. As a matter of fact, Quakers neither baptize nor celebrate the Lord's Supper, and yet the quality of religion among them is as fine and true as in any other Church. Methodism recognizes this fact, and there are now in the Methodist Church some members who have never been baptized, because they were received by certificate from the Society of Friends. Baptism and the Holy Communion are means of grace. But sacramentalism has had its day and failed. The only hope for the individual and for the world is in the spirit of Jesus Christ. The value of any ordinance is determined by the degree to which it aids people to come into possession of, and retain, the Christlike mind.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIANITY AND INSTITUTIONALISM

RELIGION is the life of God in the soul of man. Christian religion is the abundance of life received through contact with God in Jesus Christ.

All life fashions for itself an organism through which it may find expression and affect the surrounding world. The form of the organism will be determined by the life itself and the nature of the environment in which it is developed. The fur of an animal becomes thick in winter and thin in summer. Civil life everywhere is organized as government, the form of which is always affected by the stage of development and by the conditions of living. The community must be prepared through organization to overcome difficulties and ward off its foes. Whenever minds and hearts are stirred by a new impulse, people who feel its power are drawn together, and a society is formed.

The Church is organized spiritual life. It is a society created and sustained by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Any definition which finds the distinguishing characteristics of the Church in forms, or creeds, or ordinances excludes some that ought to be included. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the Church. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Christianity, as the true religion, does four things. In the first place, it teaches people how to worship God "in spirit and in truth" and provides for the com-

munal and public recognition and adoration of the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of all human life. In the second place, it satisfies the desire for spiritual fellowship. Man is by nature a social being, and people find many grounds of congeniality; but companionship reaches its highest joy in the region of the interests of the soul. In the third place, Christianity provides for the cultivation of the spiritual life. As people share their experiences and work as comrades at the common task, they grow in grace and knowledge. In the fourth place, Christianity undertakes to bring up each incoming generation in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and to unite the whole world in a fellowship under Jesus Christ as Head. It is needless to say that these things cannot be done without organization or by working in a haphazard way. The Church is to Christianity what the body is to the soul. Unorganized religion is "a rope of sand."

Institutionalism is that interpretation of Christianity which regards spiritual life as inseparable from, and wholly dependent upon, a divinely revealed form of organization. Institutionalists in religion may disagree among themselves concerning the form revealed, but they all believe that there is one, and only one, true form of the organized Church. Roman Catholics hold that there can be no Church without a pope, while High-Church Episcopalians believe that the bishops make the Church and that the pope is no more than one of many bishops. Institutionalists in government claim that there is only one true form of civil organization. One may think that the true form is a

monarchy, another that it is an oligarchy, and still another that it is a democracy, but they all deny that one form might be best for one age or country and another for another.

In the Roman Catholic view the Church is defined as "a body of men united together for the profession of the same Christian faith and by participation in the same sacraments, under the governance of local pastors, more especially of the Roman Pontiff, sole Vicar of Christ on earth." This Church claims that an organization calling itself a Church of Christ must not only have the form miraculously established by Christ and the apostles, but it must be able to show that it has had that form from the beginning. An organization might duplicate the hierarchy from the pope down, but it would not be a true Church, because the apostolical succession would be lacking.

In institutionalism the chief aim is to preserve the form and continuity of a miraculously constituted organization. The Church, which is a means for the expression of spiritual life, becomes an end in itself, and Christianity is identified with a particular form of the organized Church, apart from which there is no salvation. Then the sin of sins, the one unpardonable transgression, becomes a denial of ecclesiastical authority. Rome can wink at any violation of the moral law, but it cannot tolerate a rejection of its claim to the right to rule the consciences of men. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. The form of organization must be preserved at any cost. When the Church thus puts its own preservation first, it forsakes the supreme

law of spiritual life. The principle holds for organizations, as well as for individuals, that "he that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake and the gospel's shall find it." Institutions are made for man, and not man for institutions. The form of Church organization is no exception.

Simultaneously with sacramentalism, institutionalism entered the Church as an enormously injurious misinterpretation of the Christian religion. Where did it come from? Certainly not from Jesus or the apostles. There is not a hint in the New Testament that any officer in the Church would be given authority to lord it over men's minds and consciences, much less their lives and bodies. Jesus contrasted the organization of the Church with the existing form of human government and declared that the only road to greatness in his kingdom lay along the way of service. "He that would be great among you, let him be the servant of all." The Church entered into this blind alley by aping the power of Rome. As sacramentalism was a foreign element imported into Christianity from the mystery religions of the East, institutionalism was a foreign element borrowed from the Roman Empire.

Rome had a genius for law. While the Jews were wrestling with the problems of religion and the Greeks were reaching perfection in art, the Romans were preparing to rule the world; and when the Roman spirit became dominant in the Church, it was inevitable that an ecclesiastical hierarchy should be built up upon the model of the Roman Empire.

Christianity began as a society within Judaism.

It was at first a "way" of life, based upon a sure conviction that Jesus was the promised Messiah and that the day of Israel's deliverance was at hand. After the day of Pentecost the Christian group in Jerusalem continued to worship in the temple, and as the disciples carried the news into other sections and countries, they attached themselves to the synagogue. James, who held the chief place among the apostles because of his kinship to Jesus, retained his reputation for devoutness among his people, and the organization of the Church over which he presided closely resembled the synagogue, which furnished the model for all the early Churches among the Jews. When the gospel was preached to Greeks in cities away from Palestine, the organization took forms suggested by Greek societies and town assemblies. The new life, wherever it took root, organized itself into forms with which the people were already more or less familiar, and this is what has taken place in every age and country, whenever the life of the Church has been permitted to express itself spontaneously.

When the apostles began their ministry in Jerusalem, they not unnaturally undertook to do themselves everything that came to hand. They preached, prayed, healed, and looked after the distribution of food to those who were dependant upon the benevolence of the congregation. When there arose a murmuring among the Greek-speaking Jews, because their widows were being neglected in the daily ministration, the apostles saw that part of their work was being poorly done, because they were trying to carry burdens that

should have been shared by others, and they asked the congregation to select seven devout and discreet men to look after the serving of tables. Then the office of deacon came into existence, not through miraculous revelation, not after a pattern shown to Peter upon some mount of transfiguration, but through providential guidance in the application of sanctified common sense to the situation.

This method for providing for a division of labor in the Church was not discarded at the close of the apostolic age, but that which was begun by the apostles has continued in every age and country. That is to say, the Church has not tried to build itself upon a model miraculously revealed and permanently fixed in the New Testament, but it has multiplied offices and officers as the need for these has been indicated by the environment. And the more vital the Church has been at any time, the more ready have been its leaders to create new forms with which to meet new opportunities. As floods, pouring down from the sky, divide up and flow over the earth in irrigating streams which are determined by the topography of the land, so the divine life, breaking forth from the fountainhead in Jesus Christ, has flowed in channels marked out by the ordinary experience of life. What was more natural, or fitting, than that the growing Church in the West should avail itself of the product of the organizing genius of Rome as a model for the organization of its own manifold life? At any rate, that is exactly what happened. The Medieval Church was, in the main, a reproduction of the Roman Empire.

Political centers became religious centers, and the Church created for itself officers corresponding to the officers of the law. The dignity of bishops was measured by the importance of the cities in which they lived, and before the close of the second century the bishop of the world's political capital was generally recognized as *primus inter pares*. By the middle of the fifth century conditions were ripe for the assertion of the claim of Leo the Great to universal authority, and the Roman Pontiff was ready to appropriate the prerogatives that formerly belonged to the Roman emperor as *Pontifex Maximus*.

Of course, this concentration of authority in the hands of the bishop of Rome did not come about without vigorous and numerous, though vain, protests. A paragraph from Sabatier, containing quotations from letters written about the middle of the third century, will indicate the force of the opposition at that time:

> Especially important is the letter of Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea. Nothing more incisive has ever been written against Roman autocracy. "Stephen does not blush to call Cyprian a false Christian, a false apostle, an artisan of deceit and falsehood. With the consciousness of being himself all that, he takes the initiative and throws into the other's face falsely that which he deserves to have said of himself. . . . Righteous indignation seizes me in the presence of such overt and manifest stupidity in the case of one who thus glorifies himself instead of his episcopate, who insists that he possesses the heritage of Peter, upon whom rest the foundations of the Church, when he is himself overthrowing its foundations." Addressing himself more directly to Stephen, he adds: "What grave sin hast thou not brought upon thy head by separating thyself as thou hast done from so many Churches! Deceive not thyself; in seeking to shut

out others thou hast shut thyself out. The real apostate is he who thus cuts himself off from the communion and unity of the universal Church. Thinking to excommunicate others, thou hast excommunicated thyself." Thus could an orthodox bishop write to his colleague of Rome in the times when the claims of the latter to the universal episcopate were beginning to assert themselves.

It was natural and right for the Church to copy the organization of the civil government for spiritual ends. General Booth found it profitable to organize his converts upon the model of an army. He put uniforms on them, gave them drums, and appointed officers to direct them and keep them under wholesome discipline. But if the Salvation Army should procure guns and endeavor to shoot salvation into the "down and outs," it would be doing wrong. And something analogous to this is what happened in the Church. Partly through the ambition of the hierarchy and partly through the circumstances of the time, the Church became a mighty politico-ecclesiastical organization, which was able to make good its claim to the right to rule over every realm of human life. When the barbarian hordes came crashing down from the north under Attila the Hun, the Church was the only power of which they stood in awe, and an effete and frightened civilization took shelter under the papacy for protection. The world had long been accustomed to despotic rule, and the popes were able to establish a benevolent despotism, under which all people might take refuge and to which all civil rulers were compelled to bow. The triple crown is the symbol of papal authority in the celestial, earthly, and purgatorial

realms. The theory of the Roman Catholic Church is that all civil authorities get their permission to rule from God's vicegerent on earth.

For a thousand years the theory of universal authority was supported by the fact. But by the aid of the Reformation the governments of Europe were able to throw off the yoke of Rome and establish their independence, and the civil power of the pope gradually waned until the last vestige of it was wiped out by the unification of Italy in 1870. But the claim has never been surrendered, and the Roman Catholic Church is just as greedy for civil power to-day as it ever was. The Vatican sends its representatives to all governments that will receive them and welcomes representatives from all governments that will send them. In all nations, in which the Catholic Church is strong enough, there is a clerical party, which represents the power of the Church in civil affairs. A. M. Serex, of Belgium, thus describes the present attitude and activity of this Church:

Since the war, the activity of the Roman Church is more intensive than ever. Everywhere its emissaries are at work. Their efforts are not wasted; the triumphs already obtained make quite a respectable figure: Switzerland, France, and Portugal have renewed diplomatic relations with the Vatican; the Fascist government of Italy leans on the Holy See; the Roman curia has a primal voice in the internal policies of Central Europe. Everywhere, in Europe especially, the priest stands in the front rank in all official ceremonies; Cardinal Mercier, in spite of the vigorous protests of Belgian Protestantism, successfully imposes his person at the head of the committee in charge of the celebration of the tricentenary of the foundation

of New York, founded by Walloon Protestant refugees! These results are not crowning a sporadic effort, but they represent a well-organized movement. In Protestant countries, in Calvin's Geneva, for instance, the Catholic population is openly exhorted by the clergy to unite and capture the political supremacy of the State. In Catholic countries, a tremendous effort is made to regain or keep complete control of the government. In Belgium, just to speak of the country I know best, a Catholic union, having for its purpose the centralization of the Catholic effort, has been constituted with the following platform:

1. To realize in Belgium a Christian State—*i. e.*, officially recognizing God, his Christ, and his "Church."
2. To obtain for the parochial schools the same financial support as that given to the government schools.
3. To establish the Catholic social doctrine as against all other.

The constitution of the United States provides for complete separation between Church and State. No ecclesiastical office gives the holder authority in the State, and no civil office gives the holder authority in the Church. Roman Catholics complain that they are discriminated against in the political life of the nation, and it is true that a member of that Church could hardly be elected to the highest political office. But it is their fault. When the Church of Rome repudiates its claim to civil authority and ceases its political activity, a Roman Catholic will be as likely to become president as a Congregationalist or Unitarian. There is no serious danger from the political activity of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in this country, for it will hardly be able at this late date to regain the power it was unable to hold. None the less lovers of liberty should be watchful and discount all plausible

assertions of freedom from political design upon the part of Roman Catholic officials until the head of the Church repudiates the traditional claim to secular authority and brings forth fruits meet for repentance. "When the devil is sick, the devil a monk would be."

The Church of the papacy claimed a monopoly of grace, because it believed itself to be miraculously endowed with all needed wisdom, truth, and power, and for many centuries it was able to crush any who had the temerity to question its claim. But four centuries of Protestantism have not only shown that the Church of Rome has no monopoly of Christian virtue, but that the moral and spiritual vigor of the world has been replenished by organizations that disclaim any connection with the pope. In vain does the Church which burned John Huss at the stake, which put Joan of Arc to death as a witch in the fifteenth century and canonized her in the twentieth, which sanctioned the Massacre of St. Bartholomew and the Spanish Inquisition, put forth the claim to moral and spiritual infallibility. Protestantism disposes of such pretensions with the terse reply: The claim is not allowed.

The Church of the Middle Ages was made by the forces of history. It grew up under the spell of the divine right of kings and became the supreme expression of that view. By the forces of history it is just as surely being unmade. The leaven of democracy is undermining its claim to miraculous power and leaving the theory unsupported by fact. The autocratic papacy is an anachronism. For a long time there will

no doubt be many who will prefer to have their minds and consciences controlled from the banks of the Tiber rather than go to the trouble to think for themselves and bear the responsibility for their moral conclusions. Many will cling to the authority of the pope as the hope of moral and spiritual unity for a world which is confused by discordant voices. But the day of human liberty has dawned, and those who have tasted its joys will never consent to return to the house of bondage. Yes, there are many who are ready to say, "Though all the world should turn back, there is nothing for me but to 'follow the gleam.'" Each individual must arrive at his own conclusions and make his own moral choices, aided indeed by the collective thought of the Church and by leaders more profound and experienced than himself, but compelled by none. There is nowhere on earth a voice that *must* be heard and obeyed without question. The pope of Rome is entitled to great respect; but his decisions on moral and spiritual questions are no more nearly infallible than those of the archbishop of Canterbury, the president of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, or the senior bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

The smallpox of imperialism and institutionalism, which the Roman Catholic Church caught from the pagan empire, passed over as a varioloid into Protestantism, just as sacramentalism came over in modified form from the mystery religions. The chief forms which the organized Church has taken are papal, episcopal, presbyterial, and congregational, and each has in turn

claimed to be the one divine model miraculously revealed in the New Testament for all time. Whoever claims that his Church is the one true form of ecclesiastical organization is essentially an institutionalist or High-Churchman, no matter which his denomination may be. Each form has earnestly endeavored to show that it reproduces the Church of the New Testament, upon the supposition that the New Testament revelation includes all the offices and officers that Christianity would ever need. The most thoroughgoing attempt to return to the New Testament was undertaken in the movement inaugurated by Alexander Campbell. It was his desire to do away with all denominations by taking the New Testament Church as a model for thought, worship, government, and conduct and reproducing it in every detail. "We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent." The futility of the effort has been due to two things: first, there is ground for endless disagreement concerning the exact forms and practices of the Apostolic Church; and, secondly, there is necessarily a transient, as well as a permanent, element in every period of history, so that the mere fact that a thing was done, or not done, in the days of the apostles is no sufficient reason for continuing it or rejecting it in all subsequent ages. Consequently, the Christian denomination is divided into progressives and nonprogressives, and its congregations are in continual turmoil over such questions as whether the New Testament allows them to sing and play in their churches or only to sing.

Methodism was saved from institutionalism from

the beginning by keeping its eye upon the work to be done. John Wesley was a High-Churchman of the most bigoted sort for years; but when he realized through experience what religion really is, he abandoned his former position and violated every convention that stood between him and the accomplishment of his task. When he recalled his narrowness and saw how far he had departed from his own former views, he exclaimed: "How have I been beaten with mine own staff!" Wesley held that the purpose of Christianity was to convert souls and save the world and that any office which promised to further this purpose had scriptural warrant. When Methodism created the office of steward, or class leader, or bishop, it did not ask, Can this office be found in the New Testament? The only question was, Will it help to spread New Testament religion? Therefore, this Church has never been affected by institutionalism. It has always known that the form of the institution should be determined by the task to be performed.

The true Church cannot be distinguished by its form or the continuity of its organization. The attempt to confine Christianity to one mighty organization, directed by an authoritative head, ended in colossal failure. The religious life of any country, to say nothing of the whole world, is too rich and varied to be made to fit into any one mold. That is the true Church which manifests the spirit of Jesus Christ. Forms and methods are important, but secondary. A Church is measured by its fidelity in living and preaching the gospel. All Christians should be united

with each other through the relation of each to Jesus Christ. As long as some prefer one form and some another, there will be denominations, and all questions of Church union should be considered in the light of the largest efficiency in service. Methodism does not demand that all Christians accept one form of organization. It recognizes the Christians of other Churches and the Churches of other Christians. John Wesley said, "I desire an alliance offensive and defensive with every soldier of Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIANITY AND INTELLECTUALISM

A RECENT writer declares in his introduction that one chief purpose of his book is "to defend the primacy of the intellect." He labors under the conviction that the salvation of the modern Church depends upon a return to the intellectualism which has been the bane of Christianity through all the centuries, especially since the Reformation. If the movement advocated by this author should succeed, it would restore the reign of dogma and bring back the denominational strife and bitterness of former generations.

Intellectualism places the supreme emphasis upon the correct formulation of theological doctrine and makes agreement in creedal statement the necessary condition of Christian fellowship. It holds that the Church is composed of men and women who subscribe to a definite creed and that all who are unable to pronounce the official shibboleth should be excluded. If intellectualism again becomes dominant in Christianity, Christian unity will be impossible, for people just will think differently, and denominations will increase in number until every thinking person has a Church of his own. As many as are thy systems of theology, so many are thy Churches, O Christian religion.

Dogma is theological doctrine officially defined by a Church which has been divinely qualified, authorized, and commissioned to declare truth to the world.

It does not rely upon the inherent power and reasonableness of its truth, but solely upon the divine authority of the organization by which it has been defined. Since the Roman Catholic Church claims to be the one divinely established and inerrant institution, it demands that its declarations be received without question upon its own authority. Since the Churches of Protestantism recognize the fact that the Roman Catholic Church and all others may err, and have erred, they deny that the truth rests upon the dictum of any organization and appeal to Scripture and reason as the ground for the acceptance of their doctrines. Dogma is therefore peculiar to Roman Catholicism and has no place in Protestant Christianity. In the former, intellectualism makes salvation depend upon the acceptance of the dogmas of the Church, as stated by the councils and the pope; in the latter, it makes salvation depend upon the acceptance of theological definitions wrought out from Scripture and reason by expert theologians.

Intellectualism gives supremacy to the intellect in all realms of life. In religion it exalts dogma and creed above faith and neighborly conduct; in ethics it attributes all sin and wrong behavior to lack of knowledge; in philosophy it interprets reality as ultimately intellect or pure reason. It appears in religion and philosophy as rationalism, which holds that man can, by the pure power of intellect, make his way to God.

The radical defect of intellectualism, or rationalism, lies in the fact that it takes one function of personality as characteristic of the whole and makes one phase of

reality cover all the heights and depths of being. Man thinks, but he also feels and wills, and life depends no less upon the heart and will than upon the intellect. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." A child does not learn to know its mother by scientific analysis or philosophic contemplation, but by reacting to maternal love and care. God is not a passive object of thought to be viewed and reflected upon, as a landscape or a star. Even Aristotle described him as energy. God acts. He acts upon man. God so loved that he gave. He reveals himself to man through action. He enters into communion with the human heart, imposes the demands of right conduct upon the conscience, freely gives himself in love, and evokes responsive affection and devotion. (God can be truly known only as the highest thought about him is accompanied by a devoted heart and a surrendered will.)

Of course, religion requires thought, and the Church in every age will attempt to state its best thought in systematic form. Mental laziness is a vice, and voluntary ignorance is sin. While the problem of life must be solved by living and not by thinking, "wisdom is profitable to direct," and the intellect finds its proper function in guiding the pure and generous impulses of the heart. Action from the best of motives may do more harm than good, unless it is controlled by the light of experience. But all truly great thinking is carried on in modesty, and humility, and reverence, and with respect for all other honest attempts to fathom the deep things of God. Cromwell found it necessary to say to the Kirk of Scotland: "I beseech

you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken." The realm of truth is too vast to be comprehended in its entirety by any one mind, or even by all minds. After men have learned all that has been said of God, they must still exclaim, with the patriarch of Uz: "Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power, who can understand?" Every great system of thought, whether in theology or philosophy, has had to be revised.

> "Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be;
> They are but broken lights of thee,
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

It is remarkable that the truth of the Bible is revealed in connection with historical events, and not in systematic form. The Book of books does not contain a glossary in which its great words are defined, or an outline of a creed, or a single dissertation on systematic theology. Does not this fact indicate that vital truth cannot be compressed into a final system? If all truth could be stated in a creed, surely God would have given such a statement in the book which is to feed and guide the human race till the end of time. But the Bible does not define such great words as "God," "life," "faith," and "love." It describes, but it does not define them, because they cannot be defined. What is God? The Larger Catechism answers the question thus: "God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfec-

tion; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." A noble definition truly, but its inadequacy is acknowledged by the use of the word "incomprehensible." God may be apprehended, but he cannot be comprehended. The Bible does not define God; it reveals him through his acts and through his impact upon the human soul. God shows himself to Israel through his goodness to the nation and to individuals, and at last he comes into human life, so that men may know the Father through the Son.

Whence came intellectualism? Certainly not through Jesus, who opened the door of the kingdom to learned and unlearned alike, found his illustrations in the homely simplicities of peasant life, and said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Certainly not through the apostles, who preached a moral message of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor did it come through Judaism, for no teachers in Israel ever attempted to arrange the truth in systematic or creedal form. It came from Greece. Just as the Church appropriated sacramentalism from the East, and borrowed its imperialism and institutionalism from the Roman Empire, it acquired its intellectualism from the Greek mind.

For long centuries the serious thought of Israel had been given to religion, and when the apostles and other Jews became Christians, they brought with them the rich inheritance that had come to them through

the great prophets of the nation. The personal God, who had called Abraham, delivered the people from bondage through Moses, established the nation in Canaan, inspired the holy prophets, and revealed himself in Jesus Christ, was for them the Eternal Reality. Their whole philosophy centered in God, who made all things and created man in his own image. But among the Greeks religion remained in the realm of the imagination, and serious thought took the lines of æsthetic culture and speculative philosophy. As thought developed, every cultured Greek realized that the anthropomorphic pantheon had no existence in reality; and while the gods were honored in literature and art, philosophic thinkers attempted to get at the underlying substance of all being through speculation. They supposed that all visible things were the manifestation of one substance, which might be earth, air, fire, or water, and that this substance consisted of particles, which could not be divided and remained the same in the midst of all change. The atom, literally the noncutable, was supposed to be the final form of existence, and was, therefore, God. Of course, there was a later development in Greek philosophy in the direction of idealism, but the Greek mind could not get rid of the notion that there must be some sort of fine stuff out of which all things are made.

Now, when the center of Christianity shifted from Jerusalem to the pagan world, it was inevitable that an attempt would be made to state the new religion in terms of the current philosophy. When the Greek Fathers came into the Church, they brought their

philosophic training with them; and when their influence became dominant, they undertook to intellectualize the Christian religion. The great creeds are the result. If the Romans had a genius for rule, the Greeks had a genius for definition, and it was the Greek mind that produced the great creeds of Christendom. When the first ecumenical council met at Nicæa in 325 at the call of Constantine, three hundred and eighteen bishops were present from the East and six from the West. After long debate the discussion of this council crystallized in the Nicene Creed, which, together with the Athanasian Creed that took form after another half century of controversy, is accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Established Church of England. However, the Greek Orthodox Church has never assented to the "filioque," which was inserted in the Athanasian creed at a later date to teach that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father *and the Son*"; and when the Episcopal Church was organized in America, it adopted only the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, rejecting the Athanasian as an authoritative symbol.

The Greek Fathers in this great creed-making period did their work well, and if the metaphysical aspect of Christianity is to be defined in terms of substance it is doubtful whether the work could have been done better. At any rate the efforts of Arianism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism have produced far less satisfactory results. Nevertheless, the Church was led into the bypath of intellectualism, which has been disastrous to its spiritual life.

In the first place, it was a mistake to declare that the definitions of the councils bore the stamp of divinely guaranteed infallibility. An individual bishop might err in metaphysical realms, of which the human mind can know nothing certainly; but when three hundred bishops came together in a council, they were thought to be guided in such a way that their decisions became inerrant. A bishop might hold an erroneous metaphysical view, but as soon as he was elected pope by sixty cardinals his official views became inerrant and infallible. But if each individual bishop knows nothing about questions beyond the reach of human ken, it does not help to bring them all together, for nothing multiplied by three hundred equals—nothing. A council of the Roman Catholic Church can expect neither more nor less divine guidance than a Presbyterian General Assembly or a Methodist General Conference. John Henry Newman asked himself the question, "What do I know of substance?" and as he was compelled to answer, "Nothing," he went to the Roman Catholic Church in order to obtain an answer based solely upon authority. His inability to get a conception of "substance" was due to the fact that the philosophic world had moved away from the Greek mind; and since his day it has become increasingly difficult to think in terms of an original "stuff" out of which all things are made. The Greek philosophers thought that any solid body could be divided until the "uncutable" atom was reached, and that the process must stop there, because the smallest particle of reality had been obtained. But modern science has

discovered that atoms are vortices of force, and the whole realm of reality is made up of mind and energy. No longer may any bewildered Hamlet cry out, "O that this too, too solid flesh would melt." It has already melted. "Substance" has no meaning for the modern mind.

In the second place, the makers of the creeds were wrong in supposing that a man's salvation depends upon his ability to understand and accept a correct system of metaphysics. The gospel requires moral and spiritual response, and not intellectual acumen. The blindness complained of in the Bible is not due to a lack of mental penetration, but to moral obtuseness. It is a fault of the heart, and not of the head. The Athanasian Creed begins by declaring, "Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." Alas, then, who can be saved? For the definition of "the Catholic faith" which follows is so subtle and highly metaphysical that only the profoundest theologians can understand its meaning. This creed closes the section on the Trinity with the statement, "He therefore that will be saved must think thus of the Trinity." The section on the person of Jesus Christ, which immediately follows, starts with the words, "Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ." The sentence next to the closing *Gloria Patri* is, "This is the Catholic faith which, except a man believe faith-

fully, he cannot be saved." Now, every metaphysical statement in this elaborate symbol may be correct, but to make the understanding and acceptance of it the condition of salvation would be diabolic cruelty. Such a requirement is a perversion of the gospel.

In the third place, it was wrong to resort to physical force to stop discussion and compel the acceptance of the creeds. When the contest between Arius and Athanasius was going on, people everywhere took a side, and each party had its watchword or slogan. Athanasians were "Homoousians," and Arians "Homoiousians." The presence of the iota indicated that the Son was "like the Father," while its absence indicated that the Son was of the same "substance" as the Father. When a Homoousian met a Homoiousian on the street in Alexandria, an argument followed, and the debate frequently ended in an attempt to settle the question by the primitive method of fist and skull, very much as great political issues were discussed and fought over in the presidential campaigns in the United States a generation ago. When Arius was in the ascendency, Athanasius was banished; and when the tables were turned, Arius was sent into exile. It is often stated that Athanasius saved the Church, and no doubt he was much nearer the truth than his opponent. But he did not save the Church, for, alas! the Church was not saved. At the very time when Athanasius was winning his victory the Church was succumbing to the imperialism and intellectualism, which opened the way for the rise and spread of Mohammedanism and deprived Europe of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ for a whole

millennium. The only thing that could have saved the Church was the spirit of Jesus Christ. What the world needed then, as now, was the spirit of brotherliness, gentleness, kindness, forbearance, and love.

The Reformation broke the spell of Roman Catholic dogma and contained the promise of emancipation from intellectualism. Luther rescued faith from its perverted meaning as assent to creedal statement and restored its New Testament significance as trust and fidelity. But in a short time the smallpox of intellectualism, which had passed over into ancient Christianity from the Greek world, broke out in Protestantism, this time not as a varioloid, but in a more virulent form than the original disease. The scholasticism which developed in the Protestant Churches proved more dangerous and deadly than the scholasticism of Roman Catholicism. The reason for this is obvious. In the Roman Catholic Church the demand upon the intellect of the individual Christian was modified by the power of the hierarchy to believe the creeds in his stead. By believing in the Church a man could believe all that the Church believed, and this *fides implicita* would answer in lieu of an actual understanding of the creeds. But Protestantism had no Church which could claim the right to believe instead of the individual member, and therefore it insisted that each person must know the true creed and understand and believe for himself in order to be saved. Moreover, Protestantism felt compelled to establish an authority which might be set over against the mighty and impressive claims of the Roman Catholic

hierarchy. Catholics declared that all men must obey the Church. What authority could command obedience in Protestantism? The first answer was, The Bible. But the Roman Catholic Church claimed not only to accept the Bible as authority, but also to be the infallible interpreter of the Bible. The next logical step, therefore, was for each Protestant Church to work out a creed and claim obedience to it as the correct interpretation of the Bible.

The consequence was that creeds took precedence over both Church and Bible, and controversy reached an intensity in Protestantism greater than had ever been known in Roman Catholicism. An age of universal persecution ensued. Roman Catholics persecuted Protestants, and Protestants persecuted Catholics and each other. A "believer" was a person who accepted the correct creed, while an "unbeliever" was a person who accepted another creed, or none at all. For two or three generations, "believer" has been the term applied to a person who receives Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour, but for a long time it meant a person who accepted the proper creed. There are still theologians who give the term its scholastic interpretation. A professor in one of the oldest theological seminaries recently wrote an article on "Believers and Unbelievers," in which he classed as unbelievers all who study the Bible from the historical point of view. The Protestant fathers were very earnest in their efforts to work out and establish the correct creed. When Servetus arrived at Geneva with his unsound views, he was arrested, tried, and burned at

the stake. John Calvin was a merciful man and recommended that he be strangled first, but the council thought that no punishment could be too severe for a heretic and insisted that Servetus should be roasted over a slow fire. Calvin defended this ecclesiastical and civil murder and hooted at the notion that the Church should be tolerant toward men who held erroneous views. "Shall Roman Catholics use force to establish error and yet Protestantism not use force to establish the truth?" he asked. But he received for a reply, "To burn a man is not to defend a doctrine; it is to burn a man."

Was the world delivered from bondage to the priest only to fall a victim to the expert theologian? It was not. There were two ways of escape. One was to ignore the claims and quarrels of the Churches and build up a realm of secular life independent of organized religion. And this was the way that England was taking at the beginning of the eighteenth century. When Christians were divided over questions of establishment and dissent and questions of creed and ritual, the public was saying, "A plague on both your houses!" The other way was to deny the claims of intellectualism and restore the moral and spiritual power of primitive Christianity.

Methodism led out along the latter way. It came after the creeds had done their best, and their worst; and because it saw the futility of it all it was able to point out a better way. It does not deserve any special credit for it. If it had come earlier, it might have made the same mistake that other Churches made

and attempted to formulate a creed to be rejected at the soul's eternal peril. John Wesley came at the opportune time and profited by the mistakes of earlier generations. He rose on a tide of the Spirit, which was lifting the world to a new level of spiritual life. Both Whitefield and Charles Wesley entered into the great experience before John Wesley, but he was the interpreter and organizing genius without whose guiding hand the movement might have lost itself in the desert sands of an unexplained emotion.

Consequently Methodism has never persecuted anybody. The first yearly Conference, which met at the Foundry in London on June 25, 1744, was composed of six clergymen of the Church of England and four of Wesley's lay preachers. These ten men took up the question of creedal uniformity, and after giving it careful consideration, recorded the following decision in their minutes:

Q. How far does each of us agree to submit to the judgment of the majority? *A.* In speculative things, each can only submit so far as his judgment shall be convinced. In every practical point, each will submit so far as he can without wounding his conscience.

Q. Can a Christian submit any farther than this to any man, or number of men upon earth? *A.* It is undeniably certain he cannot; either to *Bishop*, *Convocation*, or *General Council*. And this is that grand principle of private judgment on which all the reformers proceeded, "Every man must judge for himself; because every man must give an account of himself to God."

John Wesley was broad in his sympathies, including among his personal friends Roman Catholics, Uni-

tarians, and even Jews. He declared that correct opinions were a very small part, if any part at all, of vital religion, and said that a man might be almost as orthodox as the devil (though not quite, for he did not think the devil held any erroneous views) and quite as mean. The tests which he applied to men were not intellectual, but moral and spiritual, and he urged his followers to retain the same generous attitude of mind. He said:

> Lay so much stress on opinions that all your own, if it be possible, may agree with truth and reason. Condemn no man for not thinking as you think; let every one enjoy the full and free liberty of thinking for himself. Let every man use his own judgment, since every man must give an account of himself to God. If you cannot reason or persuade a man into the truth, never attempt to force him into it. If love will not compel him to come, leave him to God, the Judge of all. . . . For opinions or terms let us not destroy the work of God. Dost thou love and serve God? This is the test. It is enough. I give thee the right hand of fellowship.

Beyond the known there is a vast realm of the unknown. The imagination can go out into that region and indulge in interesting speculation, but it cannot take its surmisings for fact. No harm is done, unless men become obsessed with the notion that their earnest speculations are true and so vital that they must be accepted by all others. "The universe is fireproof; it is safe to strike a match." Theology speculates about many things that cannot be certainly known, and all men do not see alike even in things that may be known. If, therefore, creedal uniformity

is necessary to the life of the Church, there must be an authority to decide which of the many creeds is true, and if such authority is demanded there is no escape from Rome, for the world has never produced any other organization so august and impressive and enduring as the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Newman saw this, and when he was convinced that he must support his faith by external authority he forsook the Church of England for the Church of the pope. Every man has his hours of speculative thought, but most of us happily realize that our religion is not based upon speculation, earnest or idle, but upon a "more sure word of prophecy."

> "Myself when young did eagerly frequent
> Doctor and saint, and heard great argument
> About it and about: but evermore
> Came out by the same door as in I went."

Yes, many great questions are beyond solution, and in many that may be solved conclusions are reached but slowly. Meanwhile it is comforting to know that all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity are in his kingdom, even if many knotty kinks in their minds have not been straightened out. Certainly it is not the creed that saves; for if it were, it would take twenty-five articles to save a Methodist, thirty-nine to save an Episcopalian, and the whole Westminster Confession to save a Presbyterian. In a discussion of human nature by any chance gathering of Methodist preachers, all views will be expressed, from semi-voluntarism to the total depravity of Calvinism; but

brotherly love will continue, and no one will be afraid to state his views for fear he might be accused of heresy. And all other Protestant Churches have been slowly learning the lesson of tolerance. In a book which gives the proceedings of the fiftieth anniversary of the Church Congress, under the title, "Honest Liberty in the Church,"* Dr. Roland Cotton Smith thus describes the dawn of release from bigotry in the Episcopal Church:

These Founders came from their parish churches where they had preached the day before in a black gown and "bands," with a quartette choir in the gallery. And the Church people who had listened to them on Sunday also came to No. 2 Bible House on Monday—ostensibly to buy books, but really to hear the lions roar. After they had looked over the books the Founders would pay their respects to Dr. Dyer, the unthroned Bishop of the Church, wise with a shrewd philosophy and endowed with an uncommon common sense. And then by some chance remark they would begin to talk, and then to differ, and then they were off on the Great Debates, and the lions began to roar, spontaneous, real, vital. The clash of mind against mind followed, the clash of intense opinion against intense opinion, smoke, then fire. Blow upon blow, as if what God had given each man to see was of infinite importance and as if they thought the fate of the universe was hanging in the balance. . . . From these debates came this vital conclusion, that men who agreed with Bishop Cummins could still conscientiously stay within the Church which they loved, and those spontaneous, real debates at No. 2 Bible House saved the Church from a great schism.

Then the informal meeting without any motion to adjourn broke up, and as these men, after a hot debate, walked home arm in arm, they answered the question of the prophet Amos: Can

*The Macmillan Company, publishers, New York.

two walk together, except they be agreed?" and the answer was —*they can.* And the thoughts of the Church people as they went to their several homes answered the second question of the prophet Amos: will lions roar in the forest when they have no prey?" and the answer was—*they will.*

A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still, but a man unconvinced in an argument is not of the same opinion still, when he reaches home, for he has, by then, discovered that there was truth on the other side which has already colored and changed his point of view. And he also has discovered that this antagonist of his was no villain, but a man of good conscience, grievously mistaken.

How slowly does the Church learn the great lesson that the truth cannot be served by persecution! It was the same spirit of bigotry and intolerance that nailed Jesus to the cross, burned John Huss at the stake at Constance, and roasted Michael Servetus to death in Geneva. The Roman Catholic Church cannot repent, because to do so would be to acknowledge its fallibility; Judaism may repent, and there are many indications that this great race is upon the verge of condemning the enormous crime of the ancient Sanhedrin; Protestantism has already repented in sackcloth and ashes. On October 27, 1903, a monument to Servetus was unveiled in Geneva as a tardy apology for the cruel injustice which had been visited upon him three hundred and fifty years before.

The object of sacraments, Church, and doctrines is to produce Christlike people. Only those doctrines are essential which lead to the possession of the spirit of Jesus Christ. The worst heresy is an impure heart and a sinful life.

CHAPTER V

THE RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT

After an excursion into the roads that lead nowhere, it is now time to return to the great highway of Christian revelation. As harmful as sacramentalism, institutionalism, and intellectualism have been, the experience of the Church with them will not have been altogether in vain, if the Church of the future will profit by that experience.

Jesus finds in the heart a sure index to spiritual life. Ceremonially clean or unclean meats do not affect the soul. Out of the heart proceed strife, murder, adultery, and all things that defile. Salvation and perdition depend upon the condition of the heart. Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Troubled souls can find rest only by entering into the mind of Christ. This is what makes a man a Christian. All else is of no avail. For the individual and for society, the one thing essential to salvation now and forever is the spirit of Jesus Christ. This is the teaching of Jesus himself, of Paul, and of all the apostles. It is also the experience of Christians in all ages. The kingdom of God on earth and in heaven is a society of saved souls dwelling together in Christian love.

Since the possession of the spirit of Jesus is the one thing needful, it is supremely important to ascertain what that spirit is. How may we know the mind of Christ? The way is simple, so simple, in fact, that many

are puzzled by the very simplicity of it. They think there must be a catch somewhere. They cannot see the woods for the trees. *Go to the record.* If any man of ordinary intelligence will take up the New Testament, and read the four Gospels with an open mind and an honest desire to know, when he comes to the end, he will not have a shadow of doubt as to what the spirit of Jesus Christ is.

This does not mean that the Bible is a simple book, that the scholar and the wayfaring man are upon an equal footing in studying it, and that the reader will not raise any puzzling questions. The Bible is a difficult book, and the difficulty does not lie solely in the fact that it deals with all the intricate problems of the soul, with God, and the realities of the invisible world. The Bible is an ancient book, produced by many authors over a long period of time, and it has many allusions to customs and forms of thought that no longer exist. It is an Oriental book, and its figurative way of speaking is not easily understood by the prosaic Occidental mind. The careful reader of the four Gospels will encounter many literary and historical problems. He will often be puzzled to know just what Jesus said and just what he did. Is the Sermon on the Mount reported more accurately by Luke, or by Matthew? Did Jesus say, "Blessed are ye poor," or "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," or both? Did Jesus heal one blind man on his way into Jericho, or one on his way out, or two on his way out? These critical questions will necessarily present themselves for solution, and only the trained scholar is

competent to handle them. Profound theological questions will also arise in the mind of the ordinary reader, and he can easily become lost in a labyrinth of speculation.

But while the reader may often wonder just *what* Jesus said, he will know perfectly well *why* he said it; while he may not always be sure as to just *what* Jesus did, he will never be in doubt as to *why* he did it. The motive behind every word and act of Jesus is as clear as noonday. It was his meat to do the will of him that sent him and to finish his work. His whole purpose in life and in death was to glorify God and bless mankind. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." The reader will search the record in vain for the slightest trace of pride, or selfishness, or personal ambition, or arrogance, or coldness, or weakness, or fear. The record portrays a person holy, harmless, undefiled; true, sincere, gentle, loving; filled with all the fullness of God. Deputies sent to arrest him come back with the report, "Never man spake like this man." The people say, "He doeth all things well." A voice from heaven declares, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Any reader who goes to the Gospels with an earnest desire to ascertain what manner of person this is will close the book with a certain knowledge of the spirit of Jesus.

The Gospels are the apex of revelation, because they record the words and acts and present the person and character of Jesus Christ. Jesus preached the gospel; he *is* the gospel. These simple narratives contain more wisdom than all human philosophies, because they reveal the spirit of Jesus Christ.

People upon whom the light that is in the face of Jesus has been shining from childhood miss something of the splendor that comes to those who see him for the first time in their maturity. For most of us "the Sun of Righteousness" arose in a gradual dawn; for some it has been like an instantaneous burst of light from the full-orbed sun in a clear sky. Alfred Edersheim tells of the experience that came to him when he was reading the Gospels for the first time. He was an Austrian Jew who earnestly desired to know the truth, and when he was a tutor in Pest he became acquainted with a Presbyterian minister, who respectfully urged him to consider Christianity. Young Edersheim said to himself, "Christians know my Bible, and it is only fair that I should undertake to know theirs." He resolved to read the New Testament without bias or prejudice in order to gain a first-hand knowledge of the person whom Christians call Lord and Saviour. Going into his study, he began to read. Starting with the first verse of Matthew, he continued on through the book and went into Mark without a pause. He read on through Mark and Luke with absorbing interest and came to the fourth Gospel with a feeling that he was coming into the light. As he drew near the end of John and read the account of the appearance of

the risen Jesus to his disciples, he suddenly found himself down upon his knees, looking upon the page through tears of gratitude and joy, exclaiming in the words of Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Dr. Edersheim became a distinguished scholar, lecturing at Oxford and writing many books, one of which is "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah."

The reader, ascertaining the spirit of Jesus in the Gospels, will pass on into Acts to see the effect of apostolic preaching as the gospel came into contact with individuals and groups, and also to get the full New Testament interpretation of the person of Jesus. Then he will go back to the Old Testament, where he will find many anticipations of the religion of the spirit, which came to clear and final expression in the gospel. As Micah witnesses the vain efforts to please God through costly oblations and human sacrifices, he cries out: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" When the psalmist is burdened with a sense of guilt and shame, he utterly ignores all rites and ceremonies and goes directly to God for help and forgiveness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." The spirit of Jesus is a right spirit, holy spirit, free spirit.

There is still another way of ascertaining the spirit of Jesus. We learn to know him by associating with

people who have entered into his mind. Many a child learns to understand the Bible through the commentary of a mother's life upon the Bible. Christians are genuine, though defective, reproductions of their Lord and Master. The Bible is not read by people of the world, but Christians are "living epistles known and read of all men." The world first learns of Jesus by taking knowledge of people that have been with him. When Enoch M. Marvin left a home one day, a little child inquired, "Mother, was that Jesus?" When a college class went back fifteen years after graduation for a reunion, the member who had been noted for frivolity and indifference to religion while in college gave every conversation a serious turn. One of his classmates said to him one morning: "John, when you were in school you never seemed to have a serious thought, and now you can't talk about anything but religion. What has come over you?" "Well," he replied, "it's this way. You know, my father was just an ordinary man. He never had much success in the ministry. But two years ago he became sick with a fatal disease, and when he knew he was going to live only a short while, he was not one bit afraid. The other world was just as real to him as this one. He spoke of going to heaven just as he would speak of taking a trip to a neighboring town. And when I saw my father die, I made up my mind to have the same religion that he had." While softness and sentimentality are repulsive, a real likeness to Jesus Christ impresses the world with the reality of the spiritual life.

One of the saddest experiences of human life is the

inevitable disillusionment which comes to youth, as the feet of every idol turn to clay. But there is a strange perfection about Jesus Christ. All earth's great ones suffer by comparison with him. It is amazing that a Galilean peasant should prove more vital and enduring than all the heroes, princes, empire builders, and philosophers of time. Jesus is the supreme Reality become man. The spirit of Jesus is the spirit of God. His clear consciousness of Sonship to God is the most stupendous and arresting fact in human history. He who reads the Gospels with an open mind cannot escape the impression that he is being made acquainted with the very heart of the Eternal. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The judgment of Jesus is the judgment of God; the love of Jesus is the love of God; the character of Jesus is the character of God. To know Jesus is to know God.

The reader of the Gospels will see how different the spirit of Jesus is from the spirit of man generally and from his own spirit. There will come over him a sense of lack, a feeling of need. He will stand rebuked in the presence of such a life. He will see there all he ought to be and is not, and he will feel inclined to cry out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." But along with the sense of unworthiness will come a desire to become of worth, to partake of the spirit of Jesus. Why, indeed, has such a spirit been manifested in the world? Is it not for the specific purpose of kindling in the hearts of men the desire to possess the right spirit and to give them the power to become all they ought to be? Out of this craving for God, produced by con-

tact with Jesus, a great hope is born. "Thou wouldst not seek me, if thou hadst not already found me."

Even while the reader of the Gospels is ascertaining the spirit of Jesus, he is at the same time asking the question, How may I come into possession of that spirit? The answer is plainly given. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" While he calls, and even before he calls, God answers. As the need is felt, there is induced in the receptive heart the mind that is in Christ Jesus.

Then that happens of which Paul speaks, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." This does not occur occasionally, or merely in the experience of those who are temperamentally emotional. It happens invariably and inevitably. The spiritual law through which it comes is as certain in its operation as the law of gravity. Let us weigh our words: Whenever any man learns what the spirit of Jesus is, and yearns to possess that spirit with a desire that will not brook interference from any other desire, and enters by trust and love into fellowship with Jesus, he always in greater or less measure becomes conscious of his kinship to God. John Wesley describes this testimony of the Spirit as "an immediate impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God, that Jesus Christ has loved me and given himself for me, and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God."

The spirit of Jesus is a spirit of sonship. Paul says, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." Faith *in* the Son of God reproduces the faith *of* the Son of God and puts the believer into a filial relation with the Eternal Father. This is the most daring and at the same time the most necessary claim of the Christian religion. Both Judaism and Mohammedanism have had sublime doctrines of the transcendent God, but neither could tolerate the thought that deity would enter into humanity and share with it the divine life. "Art thou then the Son of God?" "What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth." The very thought was blasphemy. Mohammed promised to all the faithful unending happiness in paradise, but God would forever remain apart. He would give everything except himself. But God does give himself. In the expressive phrase of Peter, the whole purpose of the revelation in Jesus Christ is that men "might be partakers of the divine nature." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

The spirit of Jesus does not instantaneously eradicate all selfishness, pride, vanity, and worldliness. The new seed is planted in the old soil, and the old man rises up from time to time and demands recognition. At times it seems too good to be true, and there will arise a doubt whether it is possible for a child of earth and time to become an heir of eternal glory. Who am I that the Lord God Almighty should take notice of me and make my eternal welfare his concern? In the old days this doubt was strengthened by an over-

whelming sense of the wickedness of the human heart. Every man is conscious of impulses which make him fear that he contains within himself the possibility of the worst of crimes. In more recent times this doubt has gathered force from a knowledge of the similarity of the human body to other physical forms and a sense of the transitoriness and perishableness of all earthly things. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." Man is at the place where two worlds meet. As a creature of earth, he is heir to all the ills of flesh; as a citizen of the kingdom of God, he partakes even now of eternal blessedness. This condition, at once despicable and sublime, is thus portrayed by Auguste Sabatier:

> Human faculties and the whole human being have two sides which are in striking and tragical contrast. On one side are reason, sentiment, consciousness, things vacillating, desperately miserable, and by nature affected with a powerlessness which easily gives reason to skeptics and pessimists! He who does not feel all this deceives or stultifies himself. There is always a touch of melancholy in the most serious effort and even in the most fortunate success. But on the other hand, under all manifestations of this ephemeral and empirical *Me* there is I know not what invincible force, what ever renewed energy, what ever upspringing fountain of faith and hope in the Spirit following upon all disappointments, all defeats. *Est Deus in nobis.* In the Me there is a mysterious guest, greater than the Me, and to which the Me instinctively addresses its prayer and its trust. Wretchedness and grandeur, defeat and victory, all weakness and all strength! In each human being exists that strange contrast which we find so strikingly in the life and death of him who called himself the Son of man, in whom were united all that is weakest and most sorrowful in humanity and all that is strong-

est and sweetest in God. Our name, like his, is truly Emmanuel: God with us.

Yes, the Eternal Reality is here. Jesus Christ is a fact, and his spirit dwells in the human heart. He has entered into the world's thought, and made it forever impossible for men to think and live as if he had not come. Fellowship with him is an earnest of the full inheritance that awaits in the beyond—"Christ in you, the hope of glory." The most significant and powerful and creative force that ever came into this world is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. When he came, old things began to pass away, and all things began to become new; and when he comes into any man's life, the unseen world becomes real, and selfishness and despair give place to hope and love.

This is the religion of the Spirit. It has been present in all ages and in all Churches, sometimes flowing "like an invisible subterranean stream" beneath outward forms and ceremonies, but ever ready to break to the surface, when men tire of the mere form of godliness and begin to seek its power. It is the vital sap of the tree of organized religion and has more to do with the success of the Church in its mission of salvation than all the laws and decisions of councils, synods, and general conferences. It crosses all ecclesiastical fences and unites in the Christian fellowship of the Church universal men of every name and creed. In his book on "The Church of the Spirit,"* Francis G. Peabody writes:

*The Macmillan Company, publishers, New York.

Thus it has come to pass that, along with this inevitable growth of the Church as an institution, there has appeared throughout the whole course of Christian history another type of faith and fellowship; at times conspicuous, again declining in vitality, and yet again recovering strength and persuasiveness. It is a form of discipleship less easily defined because it is progressive, expanding, spiritual. It is sufficient to call it, in contrast with the Church as an institution, the Church of the Spirit. It is, in the noble words of the Anglican Communion Service, "the blessed company of all faithful people"; or, in the announcement of a Congregational Council, "a unity in the Spirit of Christ"; or again, as a group of Presbyterians has lately affirmed, "the Spirit of God speaking to the Christian believer." The Church of the Spirit thus represents the ancient prophecy of Jeremiah, repeated in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. . . . I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The Church of the Spirit cherishes the saying of Irenæus, "Where the Church is there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is there is the Church and every kind of grace"; and the more unequivocal teaching of Ignatius: "Wherever Christ Jesus is there is the Catholic Church." The rock on which the Church of the Spirit is built is the indestructible and substantial consciousness of a living God, or, as a Catholic mystic has affirmed, "the Supreme Richness, the unspeakable Concreteness and overwhelming Aliveness of God." This comprehensive fellowship of religious experience is sustained by the mighty promise that the Spirit of truth, when it is come, will guide men into all truth. To the Church of the Spirit, the most precious incidents of Christian history are not those of theological or ecclesiastical transition, but those of religious revival—the testimony of saints and seers, the experience of holy souls, the convincing evidence of the life of God in the souls of men.

Methodism is absolutely committed in both theory and practice to the religion of the Spirit. From the

beginning its paramount aim has been to lead individuals into a satisfactory experience of fellowship with God in Jesus Christ, and no experience has been considered satisfactory that does not reproduce the mind of Christ. Discussing the question of harping on "the grand particularities" of a dessicated dogmatic theology, John Wesley expressed his mind as follows:

I find more profit in sermons on either good tempers or good works than what are vulgarly called "gospel sermons." That word has now become a mere cant word. I wish none of our society would use it. It has no determinate meaning. Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal that has neither sense nor grace bawl out something about Christ or his blood or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, "What a fine gospel sermon."

But Methodism has been charged with a great task which has required a strong organization; and while it has intended to allow the largest freedom to individuals compatible with efficiency, it has not always been successful in striking the golden mean between individual license and official oppression. Dr. George Aayrs points to this conflict in the following paragraph, which is taken from one of his chapters in "A New History of Methodism":

Accepting M. Auguste Sabatier's classification as in his title, "Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit," it is not difficult to place Methodism. When Wesley felt his heart "strangely warmed" on that epochal night in 1738, Methodism was born. It was a creation of the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. By one side of his nature, however, Wesley firmly adhered to the principle of authority; moreover, he was throughout his lifetime by conviction a member and minister of the Church of England as by law established,

in which much deference is paid to authority. Conflict between this and the free spirit which animated him and his followers as Methodists was inevitable. When the soul has been awakened to spiritual realities, and believes that its intuitions and experiences are next in value to the teachings of Holy Scripture, it is impossible to circumscribe its movements in matters of religion by the commands of external authority. When he obtained assurance of salvation, Wesley became the subject of this conflict. By birth and preference an aristocrat, a ceremonialist, and a conservative, he was carried by conviction to the democracy, felt that "Church or no Church, we must attend to the work of saving souls," and became the most daring innovator of his age. The same conflict was experienced by his followers individually and among them collectively. Now mystic freedom, and anon constituted authority, was in the ascendant. Wesley had freely violated authorized ecclesiastical canons and rubrics. Acting upon similar convictions, regnant in them as in him, many of his followers were led to claim electoral, administrative, and legislative rights in their Church. They believed that all renewed souls were members of the royal priesthood. The constitutional history of Methodism is a record of the interplay of authority and freedom. One result has been the secession of many members from the parent stock in England and America, or the growth by its side of other Methodist communities. Of nine hundred thousand enrolled Methodists in Great Britain, almost four hundred thousand are in its branches.

Though the Methodist movement has become perpetuated in great organizations, it was nevertheless, as Dr. Peabody says, "essentially, not so much an achievement in statesmanship as a call to spiritual experience." "What is faith?" asks Wesley. "Not an opinion, neither any number of opinions put together, be they ever so true. It is the vision of the soul, the power by which spiritual things are apprehended, just as material things are ascertained by the physical

senses." It is a continual revelation passing directly from God into the believing soul.

As between religions of authority and the religion of the Spirit, the former place the final court of appeal in some outward institution, such as a Church, or a book, or a creed, while the latter places it within the soul. In the former religion depends upon the word of another; in the latter, "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" that the Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of God and that the Bible is true. A religion of authority may satisfy for a time, but sooner or later the hungry soul will cry out in the words of Job, "Yet shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another." As Samuel Wesley lay dying he said to his son John, "The inward witness, son, the inward witness—this is the proof, the strongest proof, of Christianity." The Dean of St. Pauls, W. R. Inge, a mighty supporter of evangelical religion in the Church of England, says, in a recent article in the *Forum:*

> In spite of differences due to temperament and training, differences which we should welcome as signs of independent and vigorous vitality, the best religious thought of our age seems to be converging upon Christianity as the religion of the spirit. The infallibilities are gone. Nor can we trust to the inner light quite as the old Quakers did. They were in danger of making the inner light itself external, in their anxiety to accept it as infallible. We do not need these props; Clement's conception of faith satisfies us. As for the old proofs from miracle and prophecy, we now see that, even if the facts could be established, they could not carry the weight which the old apologetics placed upon them. A critic of Lord Balfour's "Foundations of Belief" remarks, "It is the peculiarity of theological architecture that

the foundations are ingeniously supported by the superstructure." We are in fact driven back upon the *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, the witness of the spiritual life to itself. And it is enough.

When E. Stanley Jones, who is as apostolic in spirit as any missionary now living, was back from India on his recent furlough, he visited the great Church historian Adolf Harnack at his home in Berlin. "Herr Doctor," said Dr. Jones, "you are recognized as one of the most learned of New Testament scholars. Can you tell me what, in your opinion, is the real seat of authority in the Christian religion?" Dr. Claudius Spencer, who relates the incident, says that Dr. Harnack's eye kindled, a look of eagerness came into his face, and taking Dr. Jones by both shoulders, he earnestly replied: "You have asked a penetrating question, the most important of all questions. The seat of authority is here." And as he uttered the word, he struck his own breast just over the heart. "It is here where the Jesus of history meets the Christ of experience. When steel strikes stone then come the stars!"

CHAPTER VI

EXPERIENCED SALVATION

RELIGION, as defined by William Adams Brown, is the life of "man in his superhuman relations." It is contact and commerce with an unseen power or powers. Religion is universal. Men in every place and age have attempted to establish relationships with the invisible world. The hunger for God is as widely prevalent as the hunger for bread.

The practices of religion have never been regarded as purely formal and ceremonial. They have been supposed to be a means of actual help. Upon the lowest level, men turn to unseen forces for aid in the hard struggle for existence and for an amelioration of the ills of life. In the midst of deprivation, dangers, and cares, they seek to tap hidden sources of abundance and strength. In its highest form, religion offers eternal salvation. It promises to raise man above the devastations of time and give him a permanent place in the life of God.

If religion is real, it is enormously significant and effective, and its place is not out on the circumference, but in the very center of life. It should color every thought and be the mainspring of every action. If it is true, the fact that God is available in every honest undertaking and for help in every time of need should be continuously productive of practical results. If religion is the reality that its prevalence would indicate, it should be able to meet the test of experience and

prove a mighty factor in the life of the individual and of the world.

Methodism stands for a religion of experience. It has always believed that the true religion ought to save, that it ought to save *now*, and that salvation produces such a great change that it carries with itself an assurance of its reality. That is to say, if a man is saved, he may know it, and he ought to know it. No man ought to rest satisfied until he is sure that he is at peace with God. This is the truth that has been characteristic of Methodism, which has been raised up to verify and proclaim the reality of the experience of present salvation. This is the doctrine of assurance, which Dr. Herbert B. Workman, of the mother Church of Methodism, describes as "the clear consciousness of the tremendous objective force greater than ourselves which God has provided for the salvation of the world, and which, by appropriation or assimilation, has entered into our own lives."

In taking this line, Methodism anticipated the present trend of religious thinking by more than a century, or rather the message of Methodism has so permeated the life of the world that all Churches are now interpreting religion in the Methodist way. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Unitarians have all united their voices with Methodists in declaring that religion is primarily a matter of experience and that the soundness of any doctrine can be ascertained only through individual and collective experience. "Here is something that anyone can test for himself," says Dr. W. P. Merrill, pastor of the Brick Presbyterian

Church; "a repeatable and verifiable experience, as truly such as any process the scientist puts to the test in his laboratory. He who will make a *bona fide* experiment of trust in God as revealed in Jesus will find joy and peace, cleansing and vigor, a life that is life indeed." A religion that cannot stand the strain and stress of time will hardly bear the tests of eternity. Only those who find God a very present help in trouble can feel sure that he will never leave nor forsake them. A religion that is good for this world will be likely to be good for any and all worlds, but a religion that does not promise to begin to help until death will be apt to fail in that solemn hour.

This is the religion of the Bible, especially of the New Testament. Jesus declared that all burdened souls could find rest in reliance upon a dependable and responsive God, whose fatherly care is over all. Paul said, "I *know* whom I have believed." He preached a gospel of experienceable and experienced salvation.

But the doctrine of assurance, so clear in Paul, all but disappeared in the second century and never returned in full force until it was recovered in the Wesleyan revival. And when it came back, it was not cordially welcomed, because it ran counter to the great institutions and systems of thought of the day. The atmosphere of deism had permeated religion, and the dreaded bugbear was "enthusiasm." Conventional piety was exalted in the Established Church. The prevailing message of its pulpit was: Go to Church, take communion, behave yourself, and be not righteous over much. It was feared that, if people began to

meddle with things too high for them, they would become victims of fanaticism and run into all kinds of excesses. Better leave religion to the clergy and walk in the light of common day. The Roman Catholic Church had opposed the doctrine of salvation experienced through direct contact with God from the middle of the second century, when Montanism arose and threatened the authority of the bishops. It was a long-settled principle that the Church must stand between the individual soul and God, and no experience which claimed to give the soul first-hand knowledge of God could be tolerated. Dr. H. B. Workman sets forth the system in these words:

> In the Roman Church the individual *qua* individual had little or no place. His salvation was conditioned from first to last by his belonging to a corporation, in whose privileges and functions he shared; through whose sacraments his life was nourished; by whose graduated hierarchy, though but the meanest servant of the Church, he was linked on to the supreme head; whose saints shielded him by their merits and intercessions. Through this corporation alone was he brought into touch with his Saviour; outside the corporation his soul was lost. In this corporation all national distinctions were obliterated; the Church was majestically one in creed, ritual, discipline, and language. The grandeur of the idea few will dispute; its extraordinary hold for long centuries upon the consciences of men testifies to the strength of its appeal. In the Roman Church the individual, as Faber assured us from his own experience, realized the peace which passes all understanding as he thus escaped from the burden of his individuality and found rest from storm and passion in the consciousness of his oneness with an innumerable company of others, holier, wiser, stronger than himself.

In a later paragraph in the same chapter of "A New

History of Methodism," Dr. Workman goes on to show why the notion of a personal experience of salvation was so repulsive to Roman Catholicism:

> The doctrine of assurance was altogether contradictory to the whole scheme of indulgence, penance, purgatory, and sacerdotalism in general. We see this clearly brought out in the tale of one of the saints and doctors of the Church, Gregory the Great, to whom a lady of the bedchamber at the court of Constantinople wrote to say that she could have no peace until Gregory assured her that it was revealed to him that her sins were forgiven. To this the great Pope replied that she had required of him a matter that was both difficult and unprofitable, "because thou oughtest not to become secure about thy sins, except when, in the last day of thy life, thou shalt be able no longer to bewail them. But until that day comes, thou oughtest, ever suspicious and ever fearful, to be afraid of faults and wash them with daily tears." Any other view, in fact, would have been destructive of the priestly machinery of Rome, with the emphasis of *probation* which Gregory did so much to establish. As such the doctrine of assurance has received the condemnation of the Council of Trent: "No one can know with a certainty of faith which cannot be subject to illusion, that he has obtained the grace of God."

The only assurance that Roman Catholicism can sanction is the assurance which comes from the absolute authority of a father confessor. The Methodist doctrine is radically revolutionary in the eyes of Rome, because it emancipates the soul from the priest and destroys the monopoly of grace.

The aristocracy also instinctively looked upon the Methodist movement with disfavor. Englishmen are devoted to "use and wont" and slowly move "from precedent to precedent." Servants are born into their

lot, and their highest ambition for themselves and their children's children should be to make things comfortable for "their betters," who pay for their own keep by furnishing grace and beauty for the common life. But, if servants and tradesmen are allowed to have free fellowship with God, they will soon begin to feel that they have a right to free intercourse with their fellow man and all barriers of class and caste will be broken down. It is not easy to treat a child of a king with condescension, and if common men are made to feel that they are sons of God, they will acquire a self-respect which will ultimately raise them to the highest heights of worth and dignity. The Duchess of Buckingham felt this when she wrote in a letter to the Countess of Huntingdon:

> I thank your ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preaching; their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect toward their superiors, in perpetually endeavoring to level all ranks and to do away with all distinctions, as it is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting.

But the Bible knows no difference in standing before God between the king in the palace and the peasant in the cottage. Wealth and culture do not change the human heart. All men, as creatures, are equally dependent upon God for his bounty, and as sinners, all alike stand in need of his grace. And when that grace is received, all alike may become conscious of the forgiveness of sins and of the gift of eternal life. Where this experience may lead no man can tell.

It may place a sense of responsibility in every breast and make each man a king. No wonder, then, that the expression of Methodist belief was treated as a crime, although it might be attended by conduct above reproach. When Wesley learned that a man in Cornwall, Edward Greenfield, who had turned from a life of cursing, swearing, and all manner of wickedness to religion and sobriety, had been adjudged to banishment from his wife and family or to death, he inquired the reason. "I asked a little gentleman at St. Just," he wrote, "what objection there was to Edward Greenfield. He said, 'Why, the man is well enough in other things; but his impudence the gentlemen cannot bear. Why, sir, he says he knows his sins are forgiven!'"

The fanaticism which England so much dreaded could not be entirely avoided. The new wine of spiritual freedom went to inexperienced heads and led to excess in both utterance and action. Some claimed that they had been raised to spiritual heights which freed them from all temptation and even removed the possibility of sin. Others declared that no man had a valid religious experience unless he could point with certainty to the time and place of his conversion. Wesley acknowledged in his old age that he had not always preached the doctrine with balance and discretion: "When fifty years ago my brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, taught the people that unless they knew their sins were forgiven they were under the wrath and curse of God, I marvel they did not stone us." In many Methodist revivals down to comparatively recent times the real object of peace

with God was lost sight of in an effort to produce an ecstatic experience. And yet the Methodist revival, even in its crudest form, aiming as it did at assurance of salvation through the immediate touch of the Spirit of God, was far more fruitful than the revivalism of the past generation, which has largely preached salvation through logical inference. The syllogism of salvation by inference runs something like this: The Bible says, Believe, and thou shalt be saved; I believe; therefore I am saved. It is all right as far as it goes, but no soul should stop short of conscious fellowship with God in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Before Methodism came, it was the common opinion that an experience of personal salvation was a special favor granted to a few rare souls and that ordinary Christians must be satisfied with a reasonable hope. In fact, it was considered presumptuous for a man to claim that God had actually spoken peace to his soul. But Paul plainly teaches that it is the normal experience, and Methodism claims that it is verifiable or reproducible in the life of every man who is willing to meet the conditions. Any man, regardless of temperament, or disposition, or training, may know that he is a child of God through the witness of the Spirit. For the experience of salvation is not an ecstatic vision, or an emotional upheaval, or a sudden explosion, but a realization of the fact that the soul has found God by coming into fellowship with Jesus Christ.

To this the Spirit certainly bears witness. Some have thought that the Spirit bears witness to many other things. Roman Catholics claim that the Spirit sets

the seal upon all dogma and guarantees its inerrancy. Some have declared that they have the Spirit's witness to a second work of grace, which removed "the lingering remnants of the Adamic nature" and freed them from all sin. Some have confidently asserted that they have received the witness of the Spirit to the second coming of Christ in the very near future. Still others maintain that the Spirit tells them what to do in every emergency and guides them in all the affairs of life. When Dr. W. G. Cram knocked at the door of a Christian in a Korean village one evening, he was welcomed with the greeting: "Come right in, missionary, come right in. You've come by the leading of the Spirit; we've just killed a nice, fat pig." Now, it may be seriously doubted whether all, or any, of these claims receive warrant from Scripture or collective Christian experience. The clear, unequivocal teaching, verifiable in experience, is that the Spirit bears witness to this one thing: sonship to God.

Here we are at the heart of the question of experienced salvation. What people crave is certainty. I can hear some one say: "Now, that is just what I want to know. If I could only know beyond the possibility of question that I am saved, I would be satisfied." Some men speak so positively of their religious experience that they leave the impression that there is no room for the least trace of doubt in their lives, and people are led to believe that absolute assurance is obtainable. When we see the uniformly steady faith of a man like Wesley and recall the great achievement of his life, we receive the impression that he ar-

rived at such a degree of certainty on the memorable night when he felt his "heart strangely warmed" that it became forever impossible for him to doubt that he had been saved. And yet Wesley wrote of his experience: "After my return home I was much buffeted with temptations, but cried out and they fled away. They returned again and again: I as often lifted up my eyes, and he sent me help from his holy place."

A discussion of assurance necessarily involves a consideration of the problem of knowledge. What do we mean by "know"? What does Paul mean when he says, "I *know* whom I have believed"? What does John mean when he says, "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life"? Is it a "knowledge" of indubitable certainty? What may be known beyond the possibility of question?

Well, in the first place, mathematical truth can. "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points." When the statement is made that a direct line between New York and New Orleans is shorter than a line passing from one to the other through Chicago, it does not admit of the possibility of question. One may doubt whether these two cities exist; but, granted that they do exist, it is impossible to think that a curved line between them may be shorter than a straight line. "Two and two make four." If you have two marbles in your left hand and two in your right, and place them all together in one hand, there will be four. If you divide them again, you will have two in one hand and two in the other, as before. You know that there is no sort of juggling by which two and

two can be made less or more than four. You may doubt the sight of your eyes and the touch of your hand; you may question whether there are any marbles there at all; but granted that they are there, you cannot conceive of any other result when they are combined than that there will be four.

In the second place, we are perfectly sure of the existence of our mental impressions. When we see an object, we cannot doubt that there is an idea or image in the mind. We may question whether it is anything more than a mere idea, but we know it is at least that. When a man carelessly stumbles into a tree, he may not be sure whether he has actually struck an object, or merely been dreaming, but he cannot doubt that he has had a sensation.

But mathematical truths are truths of relation and proportion and do not give a knowledge of reality. They merely tell us what will be the result when we add, subtract, multiply, and divide substance; they do not discover substance or reveal its nature. Impressions or sensations give us only ideas; they do not get us out of ourselves. If we stop with them, we cannot have a world, and each man will be a solipsist—that is, he will believe that nothing exists but himself. We begin to have a world when we trust our senses—when we believe that they bring us into touch with reality. A farmer has a mental picture of woods and fields. If he believes that his idea reflects reality, he will fell the trees and till the fields. If he does not, he will sit in idleness and dream his life away. Even in the realm of material science something must be

taken for granted. The scientist must trust the senses. He must proceed upon the supposition that they bring him into touch with a real world. Science cannot reproach religion because it requires faith. Science itself is a great venture of faith. How may an experience of contact with the visible and tangible world be known to be real? Not merely by the vividness of the impression, because dreams are sometimes more vivid than some impressions that come to us while we are awake. An experience is real when it is congruous with the whole of life. If you are in London at midnight, in Hongkong at 4 o'clock, and sitting at your breakfast table in Nashville at 7 o'clock in the morning, you know that something is wrong. And when you connect your position in the morning with your position on the day before, and the day before, on back to childhood, you know that you are actually at your breakfast table and that, when you thought you were in London and Hongkong, you were only dreaming. An experience is real when it fits into the totality of life.

Of course, it is possible to take the position that the whole of life is one long dream and that dreams are minor dreams within a larger dream. Some philosophers have held, and still hold, this theory, but fortunately they do not act upon it. If they did, they would have to be locked up. The point is that while it is possible to doubt the existence of the external world, it is the part of practical wisdom to proceed upon the hypothesis that our senses put us in contact with a world which is real.

If our knowledge of external objects is based upon a hypothesis and may be doubted, it is equally true that our knowledge of persons depends upon faith and may be doubted also. Persons as we know them are embodied selves. While the body of a man helps him to express himself so that he may be known, we do not see the man himself when we see his body. We do not actually see the man himself at all. And yet our knowledge of persons is truer than our knowledge of objects, because when I come in contact with a person I find him altogether such an one as myself, but no person can enter into communion with an atom or an electron and know its very inmost being. We know persons by entering into relations with them. As they act upon us and we act upon them, they learn to know us, and we learn to know them. It is a knowledge acquired through faith. And faith means mutual recognition, obligation, and confidence. There can be no knowledge of persons except through faith, and faith contains an element of trust which can never be eliminated. But trust is not trust when perfect knowledge or absolute assurance makes doubt or misunderstanding inconceivable.

"Religion," as Dr. E. S. Brightman says, "is an act of faith in a reality not accessible to sense perception." This is true of all companionship of souls; but while people have the aid of bodies in knowing one another, God is "without body or parts," and is revealed through all his works, which cannot always be correctly interpreted or distinguished from the works of man. The assurance of salvation comes

from a deep persuasion, a sure conviction, of the gracious purpose of God to save all who trust in his love. It is based upon confidence in the utter trustworthiness of God, which is revealed in Jesus Christ. We know Jesus, and we know God as revealed in him. The truest word we can say of God is that he is Christlike. Jesus not only fits into the totality of individual and racial experience; he is mightily creative of experience. Unquestionably the greatest event that ever took place in this world was the advent of Jesus Christ into its life. The most powerful factor in forming the mind and directing the course and shaping the character of any Christian is the spirit of Jesus Christ. The world finds its meaning in him; the whole future of humanity depends upon him. When any man commits himself to God in Jesus Christ, the Spirit bears him witness that he is a child of God.

But the witness of the Spirit does not remove the possibility of doubt or eliminate from faith the element of trust. It certainly renders doubt unreasonable, but not impossible. It may be accompanied by a feeling of absolute safety, but still there is a difference between "I feel safe" and "I am saved." A man might feel safe in the presence of an unseen danger, and nervous people often feel uneasy when out of reach of harm. A feeling of safety is a fact of consciousness as certain as any sensation can be, but it does not necessarily convey a knowledge of reality. On the other hand, a feeling of uneasiness is equally certain, but it does not necessarily imply that the soul is in danger. In passing from "I feel safe" to "I am saved"

the soul goes from the region of its own sensations into the realm of faith which always requires an element of confidence.

Trust enters into all personal relations. Without it friendship is impossible. It is a condition upon which a man and woman are wedded together and become one dual personality. Without mutual confidence people could not dwell with one another in a society, and the race could not endure. Great souls are worthy of great trust, and they place great trust in others. It is said that Alexander the Great once became ill, and when his physician came to minister to him, he placed in his hand a note in which the physician was accused of being in a plot to poison him, and as the letter was being read he drank the draught which the physician had prepared. Such confidence is often abused; sometimes there is treachery between friends; husbands are not always true, neither are wives; but without confidence, even among fallible men and women, life would not be worth living.

May not Jesus Christ fail you? He has never failed anybody that trusted him yet. But time is long, and eternity is unending. May not he prove unequal to the task of saving unto the uttermost? May it not turn out after all that God is not Christlike? That Jesus has revealed only the surface of reality and not its very heart? May not the eternal power prove at last to be as pitiless as the stars? It is possible to raise such questions. And it cannot be proved beyond a possibility of doubt that "his goodness faileth never." It has not failed yet, but God's fidelity in all the past

does not make it unthinkable that it will not hold forever. May it not be that all past goodness is only for the purpose of bringing out by contrast the "grand doom" at the end? Doubt is possible. Some, yes, many have doubted. Only through the possibility of doubt can the grandeur of faith be brought out. Indeed, the nobility of faith depends upon the element of risk. It is thinkable that Napoleon was right when he said that Providence is always on the side of the largest cannon; it is thinkable that Nietzsche was right when he said that Christianity is the greatest decadence in human history; but I will never believe it—I can never be made to believe it. I throw myself out with reckless abandon into the everlasting arms of the God who is the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And I know, with an inner conviction too deep for proof, that he cannot fail me. It is not mathematically certain, but it is *morally* certain that his love will hold. While questions will arise again and again, no power in earth or heaven can convince a Christian that God will forsake a soul that trusts his saving love.

CHAPTER VII

STANDARDS OF DOCTRINE

METHODISM has standards of doctrine. The Discipline says so, or at least it plainly implies as much. In 1808 the fifth Quadrennial General Conference provided for a delegated General Conference, which was limited in its powers by six restrictive rules, the first of which was: "The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion, or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine."

The same Conference that established the delegated General Conference provided a method by which the restrictive rules might be changed. Immediately after these rules the Discipline of that year contains the following: "Provided nevertheless, that upon the joint recommendation of all the Annual Conferences then a majority of two-thirds of the General Conference succeeding shall suffice to alter any of the above restrictions." From that time until 1832 a mere majority vote of every single Annual Conference was required to make a change in the restrictive rules, but in this year the Church enacted a law by which three-fourths of the total vote cast by members of the Annual Conferences could "alter any of the above restrictions, excepting the first article." The first restrictive rule, relating to doctrine, was severed from the other five in that no provision was made for changing it.

No method was given for changing the first restrictive rule until 1906, when the Book Editor inserted in the Discipline, immediately after "excepting the first article," the words, "which may be altered upon the joint recommendation of all the Annual Conferences by a majority of two-thirds of the General Conference succeeding;" upon the supposition that the legislative action which made an exception of the first article left the method of changing this rule just as it was before. This provision is still in the Discipline. The method for changing the standards of doctrine is that which was marked out in 1808—*viz.*, a majority vote of every Annual Conference and a two-thirds vote of the General Conference.

The Twenty-Five Articles of Religion, which are placed in the first chapter of the Discipline, were adopted in 1784 by the Conference which organized the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. They are undoubtedly among our standards of doctrine, and they are so obviously true in their great declaration of Christian principles that all Methodist preachers and people accept them, and there has never been any disposition to change them. No doubt some of our theologians have thought that a different word might have been used here and there to advantage, or a phrase inserted, but on the whole the articles are so solid in substance and so simple and stately in language that all have been disposed to let them stand unaltered as an official doctrinal statement of Methodism.

But the Twenty-Five Articles are not a Methodist product. With the exception of one which treats

"Of the Rulers of the United States of America," they were taken by John Wesley from the Articles of the Church of England, which were put into form before Methodism came into existence. Wesley took the Thirty-Nine Articles, which had already been reduced from forty-two, and reduced them still further to twenty-four. He cut out the whole of the Article on "Predestination and Election," as well as fourteen others, reduced the Article on "Original or Birth Sin" by more than half, and left out the reference to the apocryphal books in the Article on the "Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation." He changed a word occasionally to make the language conform to modern or Methodist usage. "Albeit" gives way to "although," "understanded of" to "understood by," "christened" to "baptized," and "priests" to "ministers." In the sentence beginning, "whosoever through his private judgment willingly and purposely doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church," he changes traditions to "rites" and inserts after "Church" the words, "to which he belongs." Wesley's task with the Thirty-Nine Articles was almost altogether excision and abridgment. He did not add a single article, or even a whole sentence.

It is quite evident that Wesley did not intend his abridgment of the Articles of the English Church to be regarded as a systematic statement of Christian doctrine. Excellent as our Articles of Religion are, they are not exhaustive, and no one knew this better than John Wesley. The one characteristic doctrine of Methodism, the doctrine which has been emphasized

more than any other, is the witness of the Spirit. And yet one will search the Twenty-Five Articles in vain to find a trace of this great and necessary principle. If, therefore, Wesley had been preparing articles to cover the whole of Christian doctrine, he certainly would have added one setting forth this vital truth.

Wesley always considered himself a loyal minister of the Church of England. He lived and died in that Church and regarded all his acts as consistent with his loyalty. He and his preachers made it a matter of principle to be faithful to the doctrines of the Established Church. And yet Wesley did not regard the official form of doctrine as so sacrosanct and inviolable that it could not be abridged, condensed, or restated by the individual minister or member. The official form remained the official form, until it was changed by official action, but in the meantime any earnest and thoughtful minister or member might suggest a better form of doctrine without laying himself open to the charge of disloyalty or heresy. Wesley did not think himself untrue to the Church when he abridged the Thirty-Nine Articles to get a basis of doctrine for American Methodism, and his view of the acceptance of official doctrine by the individual minister must have been such as to allow him to continue to be a loyal minister of the Church of England and also to approve of the Twenty-Five Articles as the head of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Such a view of doctrinal standards is, of course, impossible in the Roman Catholic Church, in which the very form of dogma is considered inerrant and infallible, but it is

the only tenable one among Protestants, who know that the letter can never perfectly express the spirit.

It is certain that Wesley did not intend to lay upon American Methodism a burden that he himself would not bear. That is to say, he expected American Methodists to show the same loyalty to the doctrinal standards of their Church that he showed to the Articles of the Church of England. It is also certain that the Conference which organized American Methodism into a Church and adopted the Twenty-Five Articles never intended to put upon themselves a burden which their great and worthy spiritual father did not bear. They did not think that they were confining the thought of the Church forever within the limits of the letter of a creed. It is a curious fact that the change of a word crept into the Articles within two years after their adoption. The First Article, "Of Faith in the Holy Trinity," had come through Wesley's hand unaltered, and in the Discipline of 1784 it began, "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions." But in the Discipline of 1786 the word "passions" is omitted, so that the article reads, "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts." Somebody probably thought that Methodists, of all people, should be the last to think of Deity as pure thought and will, wholly without emotion, and altered the Article accordingly.

The casual reader of any copy of the Discipline from 1832 to 1906, when he saw that the General Conference could not "establish any new standards or

rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine," and that no provision whatever was given for changing this regulation, might infer that the Church had certain definitely designated and clearly defined forms of doctrine so precious that they must be preserved in the very letter to the end of time. Some have supposed that, by inserting the words, "excepting the first article," the Church meant to make it impossible to change Methodist doctrine. But such was not the case. We have already seen that at first the provision for change applied to all six articles alike and that the first article was not placed on a different footing until 1832. Those Methodist fathers of 1808 were not so careful in guarding the "form of sound words" as it might seem. The results of their labors are recorded in a book which bears the title, "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church." Surely this book will say what "the present existing and established standards of doctrine" are. But no. The reader will go to the end without finding any further reference to them.

The truth is that those Methodist fathers were guarding against *more* doctrine as much as they were against *less* doctrine. They were afraid that, if they gave the General Conference a free hand in adopting doctrinal standards, they might have occasion to make the complaint in doctrine that Jacob made in wages when he said to Laban, "Thou hast changed my wages ten times." It is an easy thing for an ecclesiastical body to produce doctrinal definitions, and each General Conference might wish to try its hand at a statement

of the faith. The consequence might be that the Church might be given some additional pronouncement to defend and propagate every four years. And it is much easier to accumulate doctrinal forms than it is to get rid of them, even after they appear to be erroneous. The fathers were guarding against too much doctrine. They had seen enough of that. England and Europe had been victimized by religious oppression for generations, as the victorious party always tried to force its definitions upon the whole Church, and American Methodism desired to avoid a repetition of that experience. The Thirty-Nine Articles had been wrought out with great care. They were purposely worded with a view to avoiding controversy and providing a basis upon which all Protestants might stand; and, with the exception of a few minor sects, all Protestants were agreed upon them. In adopting an abridgment of them, therefore, early Methodism ran no risk of sectional controversy, oppression of conscience, and doctrinal divisions.

This dread of the possible consequences of official creeds has persisted in Methodism to the present time. It is generally admitted that there is no concise and comprehensive statement of the faith and purpose of Methodism in existence, and many have thought that there would be a great advantage in putting before the world and before the rank and file of the Church itself a brief official expression of the faith, motives, and aims of world-wide Methodism. A few years ago Dr. W. F. Tillett prepared such a statement, and the General Conference of 1906, in face of the expressed

opposition of the venerable Bishop A. W. Wilson, passed a resolution inviting the other branches of Methodism to coöperate in preparing a statement which would set forth "the things which are most surely believed among us." But the other Methodist Churches did not act upon the resolution, and Bishop Denny wrote an article, which appeared in the July *Review* of 1906 and also in the April number of 1923, in which he pointed out a lurking danger. It appears that Bishop Denny thinks that Methodism has all the officially defined doctrine it desires or needs. He asks:

> Is the new creed to be a test of heresy? Is Methodism, hitherto allowing large latitude for difference of opinion, now to be put in a strait-jacket? There is an ominous implication in a paragraph of an article published in the July number of this *Review*—a cloud, possibly no larger than a man's hand, yet possibly the harbinger of a coming storm: "That Church creeds must be used at times and under certain conditions to settle questions of heresy, and to silence disseminators of dangerous and hurtful error, is not to be denied." Is this to be one of the functions of the proposed new creed? True, the paragraph says a creed in our day is not meant to be a torch with which a bigot goes forth to hunt for heretics that he may burn them, but rather a lamp to seek for lost sinners and to illumine the way to the Saviour. Suppose this to be the main purpose of the new creed, can it also incidentally be used to settle questions of heresy and to silence disseminators of dangerous and hurtful error? If it can under any circumstances "be used" for this purpose, then its function must be obligatory, a test of heresy; otherwise it could not "be used to settle questions of heresy."

It is clear that Wesley's "Notes on the New Testament" are among the standards of Methodism. In fact, this volume is the only standard that is marked

off with perfect accuracy and accepted by world-wide Methodism. The Twenty-Five Articles, which are accepted in the United States and Canada, have not been officially adopted in English Methodism, but the "Notes on the New Testament" are recognized the world over as a Methodist standard. There are some sermons of Wesley's also, but oddly enough there is a difference of opinion on just which sermons should be included. In the United States and Canada the number is fifty-two, and these are included in the Course of Study for undergraduate preachers of our Church. "The Constitution and Polity of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1898," refers to "fifty-three standard sermons of John Wesley," and "A Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline," the publication of the Wesleyan Methodist Church for 1914, gives the report of a commission which had been appointed to ascertain which were standard sermons, and this report gives the number as forty-four. Which, then, are the standard sermons? Is the number forty-four, fifty-two, or fifty-three? In the "Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, 1808," there are five doctrinal sections, headed as follows: "Of Christian Perfection"; "Against Antinomianism"; "Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, Election, and Reprobation"; "Serious Thoughts on the Infallible Unconditional Perseverance of All that Have Once Experienced Faith in Christ"; "Of Christian Perfection—A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, by the Rev. John Wesley." Did the Conference intend to

include this section among the doctrinal standards, or only to put forth a timely utterance upon important religious questions? Religious subjects were discussed at all the early Conferences in England, and the conclusions were set down in the published "Minutes" in the form of questions and answers. Are these minutes also among the doctrinal standards? These questions indicate that it is by no means certain just what Methodist standards are, and also that the fathers were not as careful in preserving doctrinal forms as they have been thought to have been.

In Tigert's "Constitutional History of American Methodism," the author says:

> Referring to the Course of Study as contained in the current edition of the Discipline (1890), we find that the bishops have made some significant changes. The present generation of preachers may have forgotten the works which constitute the standards: the bishops have so adjusted the Course of Study that in a few years hence every deacon in the Connection will be as familiar with all the standards as each itinerant now is with the Articles of Religion. Instead of assigning one volume of Wesley's sermons to each year in the four years' course, as heretofore, the bishops have omitted the third and fourth volumes. The first fifty-two sermons of the edition issued by our Publishing House include all the sermons embraced in the original four-volume edition; and these fifty-two sermons are the ones nominated as standards of doctrine in Mr. Wesley's original "Deeds of Settlement." . . . The Notes on the New Testament are also included in the Course of Study for the first two years

Alas! for the brevity of the anticipated heydey of a ministry as familiar with the standards as the well-

instructed scribe was with the sayings of the wise. The sermons, indeed, remain in the Course, but bishops arose in the Church who knew not the "Notes on the New Testament," and this compendious volume disappeared from the Course of Study in 1910 to remain unstudied and unread—and unregretted—to the present hour. What do our guardians of orthodoxy mean by allowing fully one-half of our Methodist standards to fall into disuse? How can they let a whole generation of Methodist preachers grow up without being required even to read Wesley's "Notes"? Well, for one reason, because they are sensible men. The only complaint the writer has to make is that the book was still in the Course when he went through. And this is not said in a disparaging way. Wesley was a commentator of rare insight and great common sense. He availed himself of Bengel's excellent work and added many explanations and illuminating remarks of his own. His method of interpreting the text is the best that can be followed. In his translation he anticipated the Revised Version in many passages by a century and a half. This volume should still be on the shelf of every Methodist preacher for reference. But commentaries are not designed to be read consecutively, and it is next to impossible to give a satisfactory examination upon one of them. Moreover, commentaries need to be brought up to date at least once in fifty years, and many discoveries have shed their light upon the text of the New Testament since Wesley's day. It might be well to require all preachers to

possess Wesley's "Notes," but—standard though it is—this book should not be in the Course of Study.*

There is still another way of accounting for the fact that the fathers have not been careful to enumerate and mark out the exact bounds of the standards of Methodist doctrine. These standards are not in systematic form. They are not like a machine which requires the presence of every part in order to run. They are like a stream from which the thirsty traveler may drink at any point. They are like a loaf of bread which will reveal its flavor when attacked from any side. When a buyer is sampling cotton, he does not need to go through the whole bale to ascertain its quality. By taking a large handful from each side, he can tell whether the whole bale is poor or from fair to middling. The reader does not need to go through all of Wesley's sermons or to know just which the standard sermons are in order to learn what Methodist doctrine is. Take a dozen of the one hundred and forty sermons contained in Wesley's works, and read them, and the great doctrines which Wesley preached, and which Methodism preaches, will come out.

It follows as a matter of course that, since the standards of Methodism are sermons and notes on Scripture

*Though the attitude of Methodism toward Standards of Doctrine is here illustrated through reference to the Discipline of the M. E. Church, South, the point might have been made with equal clearness by citing the Discipline of the M. E. Church. The Course of Study in that Church contains "Wesley's Sermons," volumes I. and II., for "collateral reading and study," and the Discipline nowhere mentions "Wesley's Notes."

and not a compact system of doctrine, there can be no question of *verbal* acceptance. When the standards of doctrine in a Church are a closely knit system, there is always room for quarrel between strict constructionists and free interpreters, and some may say, "There is the whole consistent system; all of it stands or falls together; take it or leave it." But no writer of sermons or commentator would be so rash as to demand that every utterance of his should be received by a Church *verbatim et literatim*, and even the most ardent hero worshiper would not expect his favorite preacher or interpreter to write with such accuracy and wisdom that he would never limp in any statement. "You may agree with *what* I say without agreeing with *all* I say." By making Wesley's Sermons and Notes standards of doctrine Methodism means to say: "If you would learn what the *substance* of true preaching is, read the sermons of Wesley; if you would know what the *manner* of preaching should be, read the sermons of Wesley; if you would understand what the *object* of preaching is, read the sermons of Wesley; if you would ascertain how Scripture should be interpreted, study Wesley's 'Notes on the New Testament.'" No man ever got at the meat of the gospel with greater sureness than John Wesley, or presented it with greater plainness and directness. There is no attempt at eloquence, or effort to use fine language, or straining after effect. He does not try to impress the reader with his learning or even with his earnestness. His manner is so sincere and unaffected, and his object in uttering the truth is so clear, that the reader

loses sight of the messenger and takes notice only of the message. In his "Notes" Wesley avoids all strained and fanciful speculation and endeavors to bring out the true meaning of Scripture. Even in his comments on Revelation, "the happy hunting ground of cranks," he remains as close to the known and practical as possible.

It is often stated that Methodism the world over is one in doctrine. This is true in spite of the fact that the officially accepted standards are not the same in all branches. The substance of Methodist preaching is written so large in expression, and especially in experience, that "he who runs may read." "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." The unifying principle of universal Methodism is the conviction that the greatest of all doctrines is the reality of a personal experience of fellowship with God. "Roman Catholicism is a doctrine of the Church, Calvinism a doctrine of God, Methodism a doctrine of religion."

It is evident from what has already been said that Methodist preachers are not drilled in certain standards of doctine. The "Notes" have dropped out of the Course of Study and fallen into disuse. Few preachers give special attention to Wesley's sermons after the examination upon the second volume at the end of the second year. The Articles of Religion are studied only in a general way as a part of the Discipline. They are not expounded in any book in the Course of Study, and no preacher ever delivers a series of sermons upon them. It is probable that no Church in the world

lays less practical emphasis upon specific standards of doctrine. Upon what pabulum, then, has Methodism fed that it has grown so great? What books have the preachers studied for their own profit? From what source has the substance of their preaching been derived? I answer, *The Bible.* John Wesley's sermons were filled with quotations from the Scriptures and saturated with Bible truth. While the Methodist preacher has read many books, his constant companion has been the Bible, and he has always tried to get his message from the sacred book. One of the branches of the Church in the mother country was known as Bible Christian Methodists. Theoretically, the Bible has been exalted above all creeds and standards, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and practically, it has been used as the primary source for material in preaching. Methodism has been built upon the Bible and the experience which it reveals.

Of course, there have been other sources of help and inspiration. The thinkers and saints of all the Christian centuries have been drawn upon. Methodist preachers have availed themselves of the best religious thought of modern times, borrowing freely from the product of all denominations. The course of study contains at least a dozen books by writers who are not Methodists, the very important volume on "Christian Doctrine" coming from an English Congregationalist. There is no tariff wall separating Methodism from other Churches. Truth is freely taken from any and every source, and given just as freely. Methodist preachers have always stayed close to the life of the world and

gained directness for their message through keen observation. Above all, they have preached out of personal experience. A preacher may seldom tell his "religious experience," but his message is impotent unless it has experience behind it.

In placing Methodism doctrinally, it is a mistake to suppose that the Methodist Church places the chief emphasis upon an emotional experience or upon rules of conduct, and that it lays little stress upon truth. The notion that it makes but little difference what a man believes is utterly erroneous and highly dangerous, because no man can rise higher than his belief, though he may fall far below it. But it is not easy to point out the doctrines which differentiate Methodists from members of other Churches. It has been the purpose of this Church to discover and proclaim the truths which unite all Christians rather than to erect another denominational fence which may mark it off from all others. It holds that differences of view stated in creeds ought not to separate between Christians. To put it epigrammatically, the distinguishing doctrine of Methodism is that it has no distinguishing doctrine. It is enough for Methodists to think, feel, and live as Christians, without bearing a sectarian mark. Their joy is in their catholicity. The elements of strength in any denomination are to be found in the great truths which it holds in common with all Christians rather than in the distinctive tenets which give it denominational footing. The Roman Catholic weakens his cause, when he places obedience to the pope in the same category with fidelity to Jesus Christ; the immersion-

ist adds to the gospel an element of weakness, when he lays the same stress upon a mode of baptism that he places upon the truths that carry conviction to mind and heart. A part is greater than the whole, when it comes to doctrine to be taught and believed. "The objection," says Emerson, "to conforming to usages that have become dead to you is that it scatters your force." The objection to including a great many questionable and unimportant elements in the message of the Church is that it divides the mind and weakens the impact of the great and vital truths. "It is better not to know so many things than to know so many things that are not true."

Methodists hold the faith common to all Christians. They believe in the reality and supremacy of spiritual life. They face the facts of life with the tremendous affirmation that the maker and builder of all things is God. There are two, and only two, philosophies or theologies. A radical line of difference runs between all systems and places each on one side or the other according to its interpretation of the universe as material or spiritual. Each person observes some facts which point to lifeless and purposeless force and other facts which indicate the existence of an intelligent, moral, and spiritual power. By which set of facts shall he interpret the nature of Eternal Reality? Which power shall he consider as by right enthroned upon the seat of the universe and give the right to rule in his own heart and life? The materialist says, God is matter; the theist says, God is spirit. Which is right? As the waves roll upon the surface of the ocean, white

caps appear and disappear, but the ocean abides. Is spirit to matter as the whitecap is to the ocean, or is matter to spirit as the whitecap to the ocean? Does matter forever remain, self-existent, while spiritual phenomena appear and disappear, or is the last reality spirit, which creates and controls matter and gives it its place? Are the bodies of people the permanent element in them, and people themselves the transient? These questions call for a radical answer. And Methodism is ready to say: The supreme Reality is spiritual; God knows, guides, and purposes; men's souls are greater than their bodies; all people should live here as if they were to live forever.

This belief is not peculiar to Methodism, or to any Christian body. It is the great affirmation of the spiritually minded in all ages. It was made by Abraham, when he heard the voice of God and went out not knowing whither he went. It is the faith that unites the Methodist to every aspiring soul of every time and place. It is the common tie that extends beyond all creedal boundaries and draws many men of diverse minds together in a brotherhood.

Methodism not only believes in the religious life which is based upon a spiritual interpretation of the universe. Among the religions, it is emphatically Christian. It believes that the spirit of Jesus Christ should be regulative of all thought and conduct. While it is able to see good in other religions, it is not Buddhist, Hebrew, or Mohammedan; it is the religion of the Bible. But this belief is not a monopoly of Methodism. It has been held by an innumerable company

of men and women who have known Jesus Christ, whose hearts have been kindled by the flame of Bible truth. Here Methodists clasp hands with the great souls of all Churches—with St. Francis, and John Bunyan, and Phillips Brooks, and Peter Taylor Forsyth, and George P. Fisher, men who come from the denominational north and south and east and west and sit down with Wesley in the kingdom of God.

Still further, as between the two great divisions of Christianity, Methodism is clearly and positively Protestant. It is the antipode of Roman Catholicism. No Methodist, for instance, could follow the example of a noted Anglo-Catholic who wrote in the preface of a recent book: "If there is one word written that is contrary to the mind of Christ as declared by His Church, it is unreservedly withdrawn." A Methodist would rather say, with Luther: "I will not change my view, unless I am convinced by reason and Scripture. God help me, I cannot do otherwise."

Finally, as among Protestants, Methodism stands for an inclusive Christianity. It believes that the things that unite Christians are far more important than the things that divide. It has no exclusive doctrines, rites, or ceremonies. "Was there," asks Bishop Denny, "any exaggeration in the statement of that speaker who declared, in the progress of the debate in the General Conference on the question of appointing a Commission looking to a new statement of doctrine, that he could see no reason why any man who truly loved our Lord Jesus Christ might not be a Methodist?" There was not.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUNCTIONAL TEST

THE Church exists for a purpose. It "will be preserved to the end of time" for "the edification of believers and the conversion of the world." Whatever else a Church may do, it must perform this double function. Members must grow in grace, and people must be brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ through its work.

The mission of Methodism is to spread religion. It cannot claim to be "*the* Church," because everybody knows that it did not come into existence as an organization until 1739. The Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and even the Established Church of England reach farther back into the past. Methodism cannot boast of a ministry with peculiar qualifications for administering the sacraments or of a mode of baptism which distinguishes it from other denominations. If Christianity were a matter of ordinances, all other Churches would have to yield to Roman Catholicism. Methodism has never produced a great creed. It came into existence after scholasticism had lost its hold and when the great creed-making period was over. Consequently the Methodist Church has no systematic statement similar to the creeds of the Roman Catholic Church or to the Confessions of the Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches. Whatever peculiar claims other Churches may have, the Methodist Church has nothing to depend upon but religion.

in a faultless system of theology in order that they might make it their chief business to correct any erroneous opinions that people might hold. Its aim has been to raise up a body of preachers expert in edifying saints and converting sinners. It is well to shed light, but it is better to change lives. The preacher's use of truth is, therefore, less scientific than pastoral. That is to say, he does not make statements simply because he knows them to be true or utter everything that happens to come to mind, but he gives his congregation from time to time the messages that will improve their lives and bind them to God. With this object in view, Wesley had the early Conferences to discuss three questions—*viz.*: What to teach; how to teach; and what to do. The practical aim was always uppermost in his mind.

Thus Methodism has been saved from scholasticism and the blight of intellectualism. It has avoided useless speculation and been spared endless controversy by keeping its eye upon the object to be attained. It has been able to overlook occasional aberrations in the thought of men, whose labors have proved that they "had the root of the matter in them," and to use to advantage many preachers whose eccentricities would have made them unacceptable in other Churches. John Wesley never insisted that all his preachers should think like himself, but he did demand that nothing should be allowed to interfere with the work.

The first break caused by the application of the functional test was with the Moravians. Wesley owed and acknowledged a great debt to these good people.

When he came in contact with them on shipboard as he was sailing for Georgia, he was deeply impressed with their piety, and his admiration was increased by association with them in the colony. When he returned to England, Peter Böhler gave him great help in his effort to arrive at a satisfactory religious experience, and he wrote in his journal of this German mystic: "O what a work hath God begun since his coming into England! such a one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth shall pass away." Three weeks after his experience in Aldersgate, Wesley set out for Germany to visit the Moravian settlement in Herrnhut, and after his return to England he wrote of his visit as if he had had the privilege of spending some time in a heaven on earth. "I would gladly," he says, "have spent my life here; but my Master calling me to labor in another part of his vineyard, I was constrained to take my leave of this happy place. O when shall this Christianity cover the earth as 'the waters cover the sea?'" However, Wesley believed that it was every Christian's duty to tell all other Christians what he "thought wrong in them," and after a reasonable length of time he wrote the Herrnhut saints a letter in which he candidly pointed out some things that he thought might be improved. But people who are dwelling in a little Paradise surrounded by the desert of formal and official religion do not take kindly to suggestions offered by men on the outside, and Wesley received a rather cool reply, which intimated that he was by no means qualified to expound unto them the way of God more perfectly.

This correspondence, however, was a mere incident soon to be forgotten.

The breach came over a far more serious matter. Moravian "quietism" was creeping over infant Methodism like a deadly paralysis. The Moravians in London were teaching that it was useless for a man to do anything until he had the "full assurance of faith" and that those who had faith would be so completely under divine inspiration and direction that they would rise up spontaneously and do everything that needed to be done. But Wesley's common sense and knowledge of human nature enabled him to see that this view led straight to inaction and antinomianism. He knew that the besetting sin of some saints is laziness and that all Christians need to regulate their conduct by the moral principles laid down in the Bible. Moravian piety was becoming ingrown. It delighted to gather in sheltered nooks and instruct the choice spirits that might be attracted by it. But Methodism was headed toward the high seas for a world voyage, and Wesley felt instinctively that the two views were at deadly enmity. This "stillness" he could not stand. "The extravagance of Molther's doctrine of 'stillness'—that the single duty of a man wanting faith or to serve God perfectly was 'to be still' and do nothing, thus reducing prayer, the means of grace, and good works into hindrances to salvation, not to say sins—naturally disgusted his logical common sense and his energetic spirit."

The society in Fetter-lane was under the domination of quietism, and it seemed impossible to bring

the majority to a better mind. And yet Wesley was unwilling to part with them and often expounded his views to them in the hope of avoiding the necessity of breaking with them. However, he gradually became convinced, after many futile conferences with the leaders, that a separation was inevitable. One evening, when he was visiting the society after a hard day of field-preaching, one man said that Wesley had been preaching up the works of the law, and another added, "which we believers are no more bound to obey than the subjects of the King of England are bound to obey the laws of the King of France"; whereupon Wesley remarked that he was "sick of such sublime divinity." The next week he wrote down what he conceived to be the difference between them, and later told in his journal of the use to which he put the statement:

One evening I went to the love-feast in Fetter-lane; at the conclusion of which, having said nothing till then, I read a paper, the substance whereof was as follows:

About nine months ago certain of you began to speak contrary to the doctrine we had till then received. The sum of what you assert is this: (1) That there is no such thing as *weak faith;* that there is no justifying faith where there is now any doubt or fear, or where there is not, in the full sense, a new, clean heart. (2) That a man ought not to use those ordinances of God which our Church terms "means of grace" before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, clean heart.

You have often affirmed that to search the Scriptures, to pray, or to communicate, before we have this faith, is to seek salvation by works; and that till these works are laid aside no man can receive faith. I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again,

and besought you to turn back to the law and the testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment, follow me.

Without another word, he started for the door, and as he walked out eighteen or nineteen members followed him. "We gathered up our wreck floating here and there on the vast abyss," remarks Charles Wesley, "for nine out of ten were swallowed up in the dead sea of stillness." Wesley records in his Journal that about twenty-five brethren were with them at the next meeting, which was held at the Foundry, and naïvely adds, "seven or eight and forty likewise, of the fifty women that were in the band, desired to cast in their lot with us."

In taking this course Wesley did not mean to deny that the Moravians had a right to think for themselves, nor was he demanding that he be allowed to do their thinking for them. It was not so much a question of thinking as of living and acting. While the society was wrangling over subtle aspects of thought and seeking new and peculiar "experiences," the whole country was perishing for lack of spiritual knowledge. Fields were white unto the harvest, vast labor was demanded, and Wesley wanted to be up and at it. The second General Rule is striking directly at "stillness" when it says that all who continue in the Methodist societies are expected to evidence their desire of salvation by doing good to the souls, as well as to the bodies of all men, "by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we

have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic [fanatical] doctrine that 'we are not to do good unless *our hearts be free* to it.'" Methodism broke with the London Moravians because they did not meet the functional requirement.

The second split in Methodism came over Calvinism. When the society was first formed, in 1739, people of all Churches and of no Church were freely admitted to membership. Episcopalians, Moravians, Presbyterians, and Independents met together in Christian fellowship. No man's doctrine or creed was an obstacle. All who were in earnest about the soul's salvation were made welcome. And when the separation came it was due to the action of the Calvinists and not to Wesley. Whitefield, who was an ardent Calvinist, vigorously attacked Wesley and begged him to give himself to reading in order that he might learn that grace is "free, because God may withhold it or give it to whom and when he pleases." "He told me," says Wesley, "he and I preached two different gospels; and therefore he not only would not join with or give me the right hand of fellowship, but was resolved to preach publicly against me and my brother, whereso-ever he preached at all"—words that have a peculiarly familiar sound at the present time. In less than two years the Calvinists withdrew and built near the Foundry the Tabernacle, in which Whitefield and others preached Calvinistic Methodism. Wesley comments thus upon the situation:

> Those who believed universal redemption had no desire to separate; but those who held particular redemption would not

hear of any accommodation, being determined to have no fellowship with men that were "in such dangerous errors." So there were now two sorts of Methodists—those for particular and those for general redemption. . . . The case is quite plain. There are bigots both for predestination and against it. God is sending a message to those on either side. But neither will receive it, unless from one who is of their own opinion. Therefore, for a time, you are suffered to be of one opinion, and I another. But when his time is come, God will do what man cannot—namely, make us both of one mind.

The Calvinistic members and preachers were not turned out; they left of their own accord. As the society met from time to time there came over it the joyful consciousness of personal salvation; and since God is no respecter of persons, it was seized with a deep conviction that the grace which had saved them was available for all. This conviction was uttered in song through the great invitation hymn of Charles Wesley:

> Come, sinners, to the gospel feast;
> Let every soul be Jesus' guest;
> Ye need not one be left behind,
> For God hath bidden all mankind.
>
> Sent by my Lord, on you I call;
> The invitation is to all:
> Come all the world! come, sinner thou!
> All things in Christ are ready now.

As these words rang out, the Calvinist felt that he was out of harmony with the meeting. He said to himself, "This is no place for me; I'm going home." He was not thrust out; he just left.

However, it gradually became obvious that Calvinists could find no place in the Methodist ministry,

because they could not meet the functional requirement. Soon a Conference is recording in its minutes: "*Question.* Have we not leaned too much toward Calvinism? *Answer.* Yes." Another record reads: "*Q.* Predestinarian preachers have done much harm among us; how may this be prevented for the future? *A.* Let none of them preach any more in our Societies." This looks like drastic action, but it was found to be necessary. Men were not excluded for holding this or that opinion, but because they were propagating views which interfered with the free course of the gospel. Wesley respected the convictions of all other men, but he was convinced that Methodism had a great mission, and when he saw that the Calvinistic interpretation of Christianity put an insurmountable barrier in the way, he determined to remove it at any cost. He was tender with men's opinions, but he was more tender with their souls.

Methodist preachers were getting ready to carry to all men everywhere an invitation to come into the kingdom of God, and to do this in good faith they must believe that there is a place for all and that each person is able to accept the invitation. If, even while he is inviting people to come, there is a notion lying back in the preacher's mind that the destiny of each man has been fixed from all eternity by a hidden decree, he cannot escape from the feeling that his work is useless, because the results will be the same whether he toils faithfully or dawdles at his task. A conviction of election and reprobation is equally paralyzing to the hearer. When he finds himself upon the verge of action,

his natural timidity and inclination to remain where he is will be reënforced by the thought that his fate is already sealed. Whatever weakens the preacher's conviction that his message conveys a *bona fide* offer of salvation or hypnotizes the will of the hearer into inaction is an enemy of the gospel of Christ. "The individual's life," says Eucken, "contains a great problem and an original decision; values such as personality and spiritual individuality do not fall on him like a shower, but have to be wrung manfully in the inward ascent of life."

In 1740 Wesley preached at Bristol a sermon on "Free Grace," which he published as a pamphlet. In this sermon, which comes as near being intemperate in language as anything the founder of Methodism ever wrote, Wesley declares with great vehemence that the doctrine of election and reprobation nullifies the gospel. If you know, he says, that each man is either elected or not elected, though you cannot tell which, you know also that "all your labor is void and vain." It is needless to preach to the elect, for they will infallibly be saved without it. It is useless to them that are not elected; for with or without it they will infallibly be damned; therefore you cannot, consistently with your principles, take any pains about their salvation. The doctrine destroys zeal for all good works, "particularly for the greatest of all, the saving of souls from death." It also tends to make men indifferent to the gospel, as it causes them to lose interest in their salvation. "If a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die, or unavoidably recover, though he

knows not which, it is unreasonable for him to take any physic at all." "If I am ordained to life," Wesley has heard men say, in both bodily and spiritual sickness, "I shall live; if death, I shall die; so I need not trouble myself about it." But the greatest of all objections to "the *horrible decree* of predestination" is that it so misrepresents God that the mind is utterly bewildered when it tries to think of him at all. It is so untrue that it cannot be proved from the Bible, for a Bible that plainly and unequivocally taught such a doctrine would show *ipso facto* that it was not a book from God. Wesley calls it a doctrine full of blasphemy, representing "Jesus Christ the righteous" as a "hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity," in that he invites people whom he knows to be unable to come and "weeps crocodile tears" over the "prey which himself has doomed to destruction!" Wesley goes on:

> Such blasphemy this, as one would think might make the ears of a Christian to tingle! But there is yet more behind; for just as it honors the Son, so doth this doctrine honor the Father. It destroys all his attributes at once; it overturns both his justice, mercy, and truth; it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil; as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More *false;* because the devil, liar as he is, hath never said he willeth all men to be saved: more *unjust;* because the devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, for continuing in sin, which, for want of that grace *he will not* give them, they cannot avoid: and more *cruel;* because that unhappy spirit "seeketh rest and findeth none"; so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt

others. But God resteth in his high and holy place; so that to suppose him, of his own mere motion, of his pure will and pleasure, happy as he is, to doom his creatures, whether they will or not, to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to him as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man. It is to represent the most high God (he that hath ears to hear, let him hear!) as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil!

When Wesley weighed Calvinistic Methodist preachers in the balance, he found them wanting in efficiency because their theology was such a handicap that they could not extend the gospel invitation with persuasive earnestness; and since they could not stand the functional test, the door of the itinerancy was closed against them. That test is still applied. The one requirement upon every Methodist preacher is that he shall function. A man may be a fine gentleman, a keen thinker, a subtle theologian, and possess many excellent qualities, but if he cannot call sinners to repentance and build up Christians in the faith, his place is not in the Methodist ministry. Methodism is evangelical and Arminian to the core, and Calvinism is foreign to its thought and hostile to its purpose. It is still bent upon carrying the whole gospel to the whole world, believing that the gospel was intended for all mankind, and it cannot allow its work to be obstructed either by old-time Calvinism or by the modern dilution, which avoids the extreme harshness of the classic form and yet teaches that the purpose in preaching the gospel is not to save the world, but only to gather out "the Lord's chosen few" and thus prepare the way for "the second coming." In the emphatic words of Bishop Mouzon:

One may, indeed, remain a Calvinist in his thinking, and be a true and loyal member of the Methodist Church. For Methodism has no theological requirements for Church membership. Methodism invites and welcomes all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. But our Articles of Religion are a *functional requirement* of those who enter our ministry; and *Methodism cannot tolerate the teaching and preaching of doctrines which are definitely Calvinistic, no matter what form those doctrines may take.*

This does not mean that the Methodist Church applies a creedal test to its ministry. No preacher is likely to be forced out because of Calvinism *per se*. But the Church commissions its ministry for a definite work, and it has a right to demand that this work shall be done. If it found within its ranks a preacher of Calvinistic views as efficient as many Presbyterian ministers, all of whom accept the Westminster Confession as the system of doctrine taught in Scripture, it would not pry minutely into his theological opinions. If a presiding elder had two men in his district, one diligent, earnest, competent, and able to show results in edified saints and converted souls, the other lazy, careless, frivolous, and incompetent, he would be apt to favor the man who was doing the work of the ministry, and get rid of the worthless brother, though the latter might be loud in the proclamation of his Arminian orthodoxy and the former might be tainted with Calvinism.

Also, it is only fair to the Calvinistic Churches to say that Wesley would not have offered any objection to predestination as preached by many of their ministers in recent years. Methodism has always recognized the fact that God calls men and nations to special service—Peter, for instance, when he says, "Ye know

how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe"—and this call may, and often does, carry with it the consciousness of election to salvation. Only, election must not be preached in such a way as to obscure the necessity for definite choice and decision or to relieve any man of the responsibility of doing his part in salvation, and eternal reprobation must be denied a place in Christian theology. When Whitefield reproaches Wesley for not being willing to own election because he cannot own it without believing in the doctrine of reprobation, and naïvely asks, "What, then, is there in reprobation so horrid?" Methodism answers, "*Everything.*" A great change has come about in the Calvinistic Churches within the last generation. In England and Scotland, especially, a revolution has taken place in Presbyterian theology. The change in Canada is indicated by the fact that the Presbyterians were able to join the Methodists and Congregationalists in forming the United Church of Canada. In the United States the Northern Presbyterian Church a quarter of a century ago added to the Confession a supplement which removed the objectionable element in predestination, and even in those branches which retain the creed unchanged an old-time, Simon-pure predestination sermon is seldom, if ever, heard. When Dr. James I. Vance, for instance, explains predestination, it becomes good Methodist doctrine. Peter Taylor Forsyth, the greatest English interpreter of Christianity in recent years, said, in his last book, "The Justification of God":

The soul goes through much more than a process. You may have—and this dire experience is what is to make you—you may have to take to the more slow and complex idea of an elect. If you take account of your Bible, the textbook of the world's redemption, it is what you will find there. Salvation and election are not separable there—a goal of universal salvation, worked out by a method of particular election. You will have to recast your ideas of progress to meet the case of moral growth. That does not come by gradual expansion, illumination, and amelioration, but more by crisis, choice, judgment, sifting, election, conversion, and new departure by new creation age after age—yea, long into eternity (for, as it is a supernatural process, it has not nature's limit of death). One elect succeeds another, and each lives for all in rising cycles. From the non-elect in one stage comes the elect for the next. And so on, in an ascending series of elects, till the whole human lump is refined, till all are brought in—the worst and most intractable last, since freedom may not be forced. There is all eternity to do it in. Here time is no longer. The ungathered fruit of one age yields seed for the next. What seems the wreck of one civilization is but the shaling for the next. What seem to us waste products they have means of using and refining behind the veil. And so the elective process goes on—the elite serving the submerged in every cycle—till we all come to the fullness and quality of the universal and eternal Christ.

As far apart as the two Churches are, in some respects Methodism resembles Roman Catholicism more closely than any other Church does. Each is catholic in that it is not a national Church, bearing a peculiar relation to any particular country. Each has a compact organization for the express purpose of carrying its message to every nook and corner of the globe. Each claims to be catholic in that it does not profess a creed which is adapted to a group of Christians of a certain type of mind, upon the theory that the Church

is composed of many sects or sections which are to be distinguished from each other by various confessions of faith. The difference between them in this respect lies in the fact that, whereas Roman Catholicism claims that it possesses an infallible creed which all Christians *ought* to believe, Methodism holds that Christianity does not require creedal uniformity. Early in its history Roman Catholicism sacrificed freedom of thought in the interest of missionary aggression. But in suppressing individual initiative it lost in vitality more than it gained in efficiency. Methodism has had to meet the same problem, but because of its belief that religion is to be found in the spirit of Jesus Christ and not in a creed, it has not made the same mistake.

The field of theology is wide and difficult. Methodist preachers are not only allowed to think; they are encouraged and exhorted to think. John Wesley was an omnivorous reader, and he required his preachers to read. When one complained that he had no taste for reading, Wesley told him to acquire a taste for it or go back to his trade. There are some speculative aspects of truth, and an imaginative mind will run out into many realms. Not all preachers will be able always to keep their feet on the ground. And sometimes it is impossible to tell whether a bold and vigorous thinker is a schismatic or a seer. Therefore, it has been the policy of Methodism to take as little notice as possible of individual deviations from the commonly accepted body of theology. "Never, where Methodism has been understood and where its spirit has been followed," says Bishop Denny, "has an honest, in-

dividual difficulty or a difference of opinion exposed a Methodist—layman or preacher—to the liability of arrest of character or excommunication from the Church."

But there is great work to be done, and it must be done. Methodism is organized to carry out a definite program of world evangelization, and each preacher is answerable to his Annual Conference for the manner in which he devotes himself to the task assigned. The one question asked of him is, *Is he doing the work?* If he is sound in fidelity, he will be apt to be sound in the faith. Where the Church excludes one man for heresy, it is compelled to locate a dozen for inefficiency.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRIMARY THEOLOGY OF METHODISM

THEOLOGY has been called "the queen of the sciences." It is the most comprehensive of all studies. Included in its themes are God, man, and the world; angels, devils, and demons; the life that now is, and also that which is to come. There is nothing that lies wholly beyond the range of a study of God and divine things.

But there is a general theology which covers the whole field of human interest, and also a vital theology which concentrates upon the things that make for salvation. There are truths that men think about, and truths that men live by. The latter compose the substance of primary theology. "A theology chiefly curious, or speculative," says Forsyth, "a secondary theology, may be left to the leisure of the schools; but a theology of experienced grace, primary theology, is of the essence of the gospel." All Churches, and most religions, have both, but it is only the theology that changes hearts and fashions lives that is of supreme importance. This is the theology of experienced salvation. It is a reasonable and intelligible account of the powers, facts, and truths that are directly concerned with Christian experience.

Methodism has an ample theology. It has never been disposed to discredit the theologian or to prevent him from taking a wide speculative range, and its product in systematic thought can compare favorably

in both quality and abundance with the work of any other Church. The great classic in Methodist theology is Richard Watson's "Theological Institutes: A View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity." This compendious volume, which was finished in 1823, immediately became a textbook for preachers and remained in the Course of Study of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, until 1910. It is divided into four parts, which treat, successively, "The Evidences of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures," "Doctrines of the Holy Scriptures," "The Morals of Christianity," and "The Institutions of Christianity." Watson has had many worthy successors, and the effort to arrange the truths of religion in systematic form has been continued by such men as Pope, Beet, and Peake, in England, and by men like Miley, Curtis, and Sheldon, of the North, and Summers, Ralston, and Tillett, of the South, in the United States.

Since Methodism has no systematic creed, its theologians have enjoyed large liberty in speculation. They have not been cramped in thought and utterance, or compelled to labor under the limitations that have beset the thinkers of creedal Churches; and though the theologians have often disagreed among themselves upon many questions, the Methodist Church has not found it necessary to establish an *index expurgatorius* upon which books containing erroneous views might be placed. The great commentator of Methodism is Adam Clarke. He was a man of prodigious learning, and his work is the most remarkable and valuable commentary ever written upon the whole Bible by a

single man. Other commentaries, produced through the combined labor of many minds, are more valuable; but Clarke's work has the distinction of being a full and scholarly comment upon the text of the Scriptures by one mind, and though it is necessarily out of date in many passages, its wealth of information and spiritual tone make it worthy of a place in every preacher's library, after a hundred years. But if Methodism had been "put in a strait-jacket," Adam Clarke would have been thrust out of the ministry, and his invaluable work would have been lost to the Church, for he held and repeatedly expressed views that were contrary not only to the generally accepted Methodist belief, but to the belief of the vast majority of Christians of all Churches. In the volume containing the commentary on Hebrews, Clarke places at the end of the comments on the first chapter an extended note, parts of which read:

I have showed my reasons in the note on Luke 1: 35 why I cannot close in with the common view of what is called the *eternal Sonship* of Christ. I am inclined to think that from this tenet *Arianism* had its origin. I shall here produce my authority for this opinion. . . . "But is not God called Father; and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Most certainly. That God graciously assumes the name of *Father*, and acts in that character toward mankind, the whole Scripture proves. . . . And he is the Father of men, because he created them; and Adam, the first man, is particularly called *his son*, Luke 3: 38. But he is the Father of the *human nature* of our blessed Lord, in a peculiar sense, because by his energy this was produced in the womb of the Virgin. . . . It is in consequence of this that our blessed Lord is so frequently termed the *Son of God*, and that *God* is called *his Father*. But I know not any scripture, fairly interpreted, that

states the *divine nature* of our Lord to be *begotten* of God, or to be the *Son of God.* . . . And having seen that the doctrine of the *eternal sonship* produced *Arianism*, and Arianism produced Socinianism, and Socinianism produces a kind of *general infidelity*, or disrespect to the Sacred Writings, so that several parts of them are rejected as being uncanonical, and the inspiration of a major part of the New Testament strongly suspected; I find it necessary to be doubly on my watch to avoid everything that may, even in the remotest way, tend to so deplorable a catastrophe. . . . On the doctrine of the *eternal sonship* of the divine nature of Christ, I once had the privilege of conversing with the late Rev. John Wesley, about three years before his death: he read, from a book in which I had written it, the argument against this doctrine, which now stands in the note on Luke 1: 35. He did not attempt to reply to it; but allowed that, on the *ground* on which I had taken it, the argument was conclusive. . . . He mentioned two eminent divines who were of the same opinion and added that the eternal Sonship of Christ had been a doctrine very generally received in the Christian Church: and he believed no one had ever expressed it better than his brother Samuel had done in the following lines:

"From Thee in one eternal now,
Thy Son, Thy offspring flow'd;
And everlasting Father thou,
As everlasting God."

He added not one word more on the subject, nor ever after mentioned it to me, though after that we *had* many interviews.

No doubt Wesley knew that he was firmly of one opinion and Clarke of another, and that, unless they had more data to go on, they might argue the question till the end of life and each be of the same opinion still. "It seems clear that the great scholar was the unconscious victim of the common fallacy of figure of speech," but he evidently considered the question

of great importance and clung tenaciously to his views. This author closes his great work with a section to which he gives the heading: "Principles which, on carefully reading and studying the Sacred Writings, I think I find unequivocally revealed there." These principles are laid down in thirty-two divisions, the tenth of which reads as follows:

> That his human nature is derived from the blessed Virgin Mary, through the creative energy of the Holy Ghost; but his divine nature, because God, infinite and eternal, is uncreated, underived, and *unbegotten;* which, were it otherwise, he could not be God, in *any proper sense of the word;* but *as he is God,* the doctrine of the *eternal Sonship* must be *false.*

Many such questions will arise in speculative theology. They are highly important and demand careful and cautious consideration. But they are not of the substance of primary theology, because they are of such a nature that their truth cannot be subjected to the test of experience; and for this reason it has been the policy of Methodism to exercise great patience in dealing with its theologians. Bishop Denny well says:

> It is sincerely hoped and believed that the vast majority of us are sound in the faith once for all delivered unto the saints; but should there be among us, or should there come among us, a good man resembling Adam Clarke in the fact of error on doctrines of importance, even though he possess not a tithe of Clarke's great ability, let us not thrust him out of the Methodist household of faith, but let us bear with him in the spirit of the Master, who endures our multitudinous errors of the head and is ready to correct our innumerable errors of the heart. A strait-jacket will strangle Methodism.

So much for speculative theology. We turn now to the primary theology of Christian experience. It is in this realm that Methodism has excelled, because it has always emphasized the necessity for an experience of salvation and concentrated upon the truths that underlie this experience. The great desideratum of every human soul is peace with God. Job raised the greatest of all questions when he inquired, "How should man be just with God?" If this should seem to be a selfish course to take in life, the answer is that no man is prepared to render the highest service to his fellow man until he can help them on their way to God, and no man can lead others into a fellowship that he himself does not know. Both for his own sake and for the sake of all others, the chief concern of every man is to be saved and to *know* that he is saved. For this reason, the culminating doctrine of Methodism, as we have already seen, is the witness of the Spirit. The great question was asked and answered again and again, being reiterated in sermon, testimony, and song. A hymn of Charles Wesley begins:

"How can a sinner know
His sins on earth forgiven?
How can my gracious Saviour show
My name inscribed in heaven?"

The succeeding stanzas confidently answer the question which the first raises:

"What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell;
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible.

We who in Christ believe
That he for us hath died,
We all his unknown peace receive,
And feel his blood applied.

Exults our rising soul,
Disburdened of her load,
And swells unutterably full
Of glory and of God."

Deism, which had come as a reaction from the intensity of religious controversy and from the fanaticism of French prophetism, removed God far away and declared that he had been dumb from the foundation of the world. The Established Church, which had been affected by the deistic spirit, taught that God had spoken through the Bible and established the Church to retain the deposit of truth to be administered to the individual as needed and that the assurance of the Church was sufficient. But Methodism learned and proclaimed the great truth that God deals directly with every man and that he is ready to impart to each one the best of all news—namely, that his sins are forgiven and that he is a child of God. This doctrine, which has been preached by Methodism more than any other, is the great contribution which this Church has made to the whole of modern evangelical Christianity. It was difficult to grasp, back in the days when the thought of the world was permeated with the notion of an absentee God, when people believed that God had his eternal dwelling place far beyond the stars and that he visited the earth only at rare intervals, if at all. It seems more reasonable now, since people have become accustomed to think of the immanence as well

as the transcendence of God and to realize that the "God who is far" is also "the God who is near." Even Spencer helped unwittingly when he declared that we are in the immediate presence of an infinite and inexhaustible Energy from which all things proceed. If God, then, is present to every man, why should he not speak; and if he should speak, what more important thing could he say than that he owns me for his child?

But when God speaks he must have a language which he can use and which the hearer can understand. The word of God comes directly to the human heart, but this word gets its content from God's acts. How can God assure me, in the midst of all the evils and ills of life, that he is friendly? How can he let me know that my sin need not separate me from him forever, and that there is forgiveness with him that he might be feared? He can do this by pointing to his acts and promises, as they are recorded in the Bible. I can be assured of my own sonship through faith in the Son. Through the record which God has given of himself I can believe in that saving love which reaches its highest expression and becomes finally effective in the cross of Jesus Christ. This is why the assurance of salvation is inseparable from the gospel message. The only language that the Spirit has through which testimony of salvation may be borne to the sinful human heart is the language of the cross. How true are the words of Eucken:*

*The Problem of Human Life," Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers, New York.

Other religions have become world powers through their victories, Christianity through its defeat. For there grew out of its outward ruin and apparent disappearance the triumphant certitude of a new world, the firm conviction that in this new world are to be found the foundation and the security of all good; hence all the problems of existence are, for Christianity, concentrated upon a single point, and the turning of life toward the heroic and the supersensible is achieved. Yet there ceaselessly arises thence for men a great question, a great doubt, a great summons, a great hope.

Thus it is evident that the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit cannot stand alone. It has its basis in the doctrine of salvation by faith. Therefore, Methodism appropriated this great Reformation principle and filled it with new life and power. The reformers all preached it, and it was written in the Articles of Religion of the Established Church. But the Roman Catholic Church had taught salvation by works for centuries, basing its whole system of penance upon this view, and the notion that men must some how work their way into God's favor is so deeply rooted in men's minds that it is not easy to get rid of it. And yet it is obvious that no act performed in time can merit a reward which will endure throughout eternity. People cannot work their way into immortality or earn a place in heaven. Eternal life must be received as a pure gift, if it is to be obtained at all. Moreover, it is absurd to suppose that a man under the handicap of sin and burdened with a guilty conscience can render to God an acceptable service, and to tell such a man that he can work out his salvation is to tell a man who has been placed in prison for debt that he will be released as soon as he has earned

enough money to satisfy his creditors. Christians do not work in order that they may be saved. They are saved by the pure grace of God through faith, and they work because they are saved. It cannot be a matter of works, because the grace of salvation is necessary in order to work; and besides, if salvation were a question of so much reward for so much labor, no one could ever be sure that he had done enough, and there would always be the fear that death might come at any moment, and, finding the task unfinished, banish the poor toiler to everlasting night.

This truth is clear now. But it was hard to see when Methodism first began to preach it. As Peter Böhler sat beside the bed of Charles Wesley, he asked him, "Do you hope to be saved?" "Yes," came the reply from the dangerously sick man. "For what reason do you hope it?" "Because I have used my best endeavors to serve God." Peter shook his head, but said no more. "I thought him very uncharitable," wrote Charles in his Journal, "saying in my heart, 'What! are not my endeavors a sufficient ground for hope? Would he rob me of my endeavors? I have nothing else to trust to?'" The founder of Methodism might have said, "With a great price obtained I this freedom." Just before going to America, John Wesley gave in a letter his reasons for desiring to do missionary work among the Indians. "My chief motive," he wrote, "is the hope of saving my own soul." It is interesting to learn in the same letter his opinion of the American savages. "They are as little children," he thought, "humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of

God." The Pilgrim Fathers, who "first fell upon their knees, and then upon the aborigines," had not found them so. Wesley found no relief in Georgia. While on board ship on his return to England, he wrote in his Journal:

I went to America to convert the Indians; but O what shall convert me? who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well—nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, "To die is gain."

I have a sin of fear that, when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore.

The great release came at last on May 24, 1738—a date in Methodism to be remembered—at a meeting of a society in Aldersgate Street, while a layman was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. Let Wesley describe the experience:

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the "law of sin and death." I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "This cannot be faith, for where is thy joy?" Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsel of his own will.

A clear understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith and an experience of the witness of the Spirit came to him in that moment. After fifteen years of struggle in a vain effort to work his way through, Wesley was able to appreciate Article XI, "Of the Justification of Man," which he later gave to American Methodism as Article IX, without the change of a single word:

> We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

The witness of the Spirit, then, depends upon salvation by faith. But salvation by faith rests upon another doctrine—namely, the universality of the atonement. How can any man have unclouded confidence in the redeeming love, which effects his own salvation, unless he is convinced that the grace which has been appropriated by him is available for all? The universality of the atonement lays the foundation for salvation by faith, and salvation by faith opens the way for the witness of the Spirit. These are the three golden links in the unbreakable chain of primary Methodist theology. Take away the universality of the atonement, and salvation by faith and the witness of the Spirit go with it. I am saved by faith in grace. But how can I be sure that there is grace for *me*, unless I am convinced that grace is for *all*. Who am I, that God should single me out for his favor, while millions just as worthy are passed by? One of Wesley's objections

to particular redemption was that it obscured and almost destroyed the witness of the Spirit. In his sermon on "Free Grace" he says:

Now, this witness of the Spirit experience shows to be much obstructed by this doctrine; and not only in those who, believing themselves reprobated, by this belief thrust it far from them, but even in them that have tasted of that good gift, who yet have soon lost it again, and fallen back into doubts, and fears, and darkness—horrible darkness that might be felt! And I appeal to any of you who hold this doctrine to say, between God and your own hearts, whether you have not often a return of doubts and fears, concerning your election or perseverance! If you ask, "Who has not?" I answer, Very few of those that hold this doctrine; but many, very many, of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth—many of those who know and feel that they are in Christ to-day, and "take no thought for the morrow"; who "abide in him" by faith from hour to hour, or rather from moment to moment; many of these have enjoyd the uninterrupted witness of his Spirit, the continual light of his countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years, to this day.

In the old hymn-book, there was a song beginning—

"'Tis a thing I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no;
Am I his, or am I not?"

Why was so good a man as John Newton, the author, kept in perpetual doubt of his salvation? It was because the doctrine of election and reprobation stood in the way of full assurance. If the salvation or ruin of each soul is determined by a hidden decree, there is no way for God to convey to any man an assurance of

his salvation. A God who would doom millions to eternal damnation before they were born might be expected to trifle with the souls of men by giving them many experiences that would seem to indicate that they were in his favor, only to forsake them in the end. Assurance rests upon the conviction that God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ as universal and impartial love. "By the grace of God he tasted death for every man." An arbitrary God of election and reprobation stirs in the mind thoughts akin to the reflections of "Caliban upon Setebos":

> "'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him
> Nor kind, nor cruel; He is strong and Lord.
> 'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
> That march now from the mountain to the sea;
> 'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
> Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
> 'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
> Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
> 'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
> And two worms he whose nippers end in red:
> As it likes me each time, I do: so He."

Two great doctrines of Methodism, the universality of the atonement and salvation by faith, lead *to* the witness of the Spirit, or conscious salvation, and another flows *from* it—namely, purity in heart and life. The witness of the Spirit means that a child of God will *feel* like a son, and holiness means that he will *act* like a son. God simultaneously gives assurance of forgiveness and imparts new life or the spirit of Jesus Christ to the believing soul. While justification and regeneration may be separated in thought, they are

always together in fact. The Christian knows that he has passed from death unto life through the inward witness, and his neighbors know it through a change in his disposition and conduct.

When Methodism began to preach holiness, the doctrine met with intense opposition. When the responsibility of the individual for his own salvation was stressed, people said that Methodists were taking the work of salvation out of the hands of God and placing it in the hands of man; and when it was demanded that Christians should actually live according to the spirit of Jesus, they were accused of denying the scripture which reads, "There is none good, no, not one," by claiming to be good. The religious atmosphere was saturated with the doctrine of total depravity in its most extreme form. Men thought that the more utterly they debased man the more highly they exalted God, and a common confession of Christians was, "Sin is mixed with all I do." This view tended to make religion a matter of correct theology and to keep it from having any effect upon life.

But Methodism insisted that the gospel offers salvation here and now, and that the man who expects to be saved in eternity must begin to live like a saved man in time. Such results were actually produced. People of evil thoughts and low and wicked habits were changed into Christians of high mind and noble purpose. The most ignorant and debased and degraded were lifted from the mire and had their feet placed upon a rock; a new spirit entered their hearts, and a new song was put in their mouths. They really became good men

and women, because they were conscious children of God. As in the early days of Christianity ordinary unlettered people attained to a spiritual insight and moral purity that were beyond the reach of Stoics and other wise philosophers, so in the early days of Methodism men in the lowliest walks of life attained to spiritual wisdom and a consciousness of the fact that they had been redeemed from sin and made kings and priests unto God. In noble living, as well as in other ways, Methodism was a reproduction of early Christianity. "Among us," says Justin, "are uneducated folk, artisans, and old women who are utterly unable to describe the value of our doctrines in words, but who attest them by their deeds." Tertullian declares, "There is not a Christian workman who does not find God, and manifest him, and proceed to ascribe to him all the attributes of deity, although Plato declares the maker of the universe is hard to find, and hard, when found, to be expounded to all and sundry." In his chapter on "The Religion of the Spirit and of Power," Harnack says:

> But it is not merely Christians themselves who bear witness that they have been lifted into a new world of moral power, of earnestness, and of holiness; even their opponents bear testimony to their purity of life. The abominable charges circulated by the Jews against the moral life of Christians did hold their own for a long while, and were credited by the common people as well as by many of the educated classes. But anyone who examined the facts found something very different. Pliny told Trajan that he had been unable to prove anything criminal or vicious on the part of Christians during all his examination of them, and that, on the contrary, the purpose of their gather-

ings was to make themselves more conscientious and virtuous. Lucian represents the Christians as credulous fanatics, but also as people of a pure life, of devoted love, and of a courage equal to death itself. The last-named feature is also admitted by Epictetus and Aurelius.

Such changes are wrought not by cold logic, but by coming face to face with God. The difference between the effect of a rational appeal and of the movement of the divine Spirit upon the soul is thus described by James Martineau:

Bring Paley face to face with a congregation of the Cornish miners of his time to try his ultimate appeal; let him urge, with his tersest good sense, his plea of long-visioned prudence, "You had better take care, or you will go to hell"; and, if that were his last word (and he confesses that he has "no more to say"), is there a passion which his word would quell, or a heart which it would subdue? Or would the listless hearers stroll into to-morrow, unaltered from to-day? But let a Wesley stand up before them, and press home upon them the "conviction of sin," dwelling not so much on the future anguish as on the present ruin of the soul, interpreting the secret shame and self-contempt of its daily recklessness, recalling its memory of a better life, appealing to its inward longing for higher things, and ineffaceable kindred with a holy God, and we know by experience into what deeps such a voice may penetrate; how it reaches the dryest fountain of tears; how it casts the strong man to the ground; how it bends the stiff neck of pride and makes the frozen heart flow down; how it may shake and convulse the habits of a life and, driving their evil spirit out, bring them to a composed and wakeful order under the heavenly eye.

How far might a man go toward attaining perfect purity of motive? Wesley would set no limit. In explaining what he implies by Christian perfection,

he says: "I mean, loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves." When he found that Christians did not always think, feel, and act as they should, he preached a sermon on "Sin in Believers," in which he declared that there were often things in a real Christian that were inconsistent with the main tenor of his life and profession, but he would not encourage any man to stop until he had reached perfect love. "Blessed be God," he wrote toward the end of his life, "though we set a hundred enthusiasts aside, we are still 'compassed with a cloud of witnesses,' who have testified, and do testify, in life and in death, that perfection which I have taught these forty years!" In a letter, written in 1763, he shows that it is the practical bearing of the question that concerns him, and not a theory of the eradication of "inbred sin":

> But is there no sin in those who are perfect in love? I believe not; but be that as it may, they feel none—no temper contrary to pure love, while they rejoice, pray, and give thanks continually. Whether sin is suspended or extinguished I will not dispute. It is enough that they feel nothing but love. This you allow we should daily press after; and this is all I contend for.

Since many came into conscious peace with God through an instantaneous experience, it was natural to suppose there was another instantaneous step into entire sanctification; and in the early days both sinners and Christians were invited to come to the altar, the former for conversion and the latter for sanctification. There is now in a Church in England an old Methodist register, upon which the names are marked, "seeker," "saved," or "sanctified." Reports of many

of the early camp meetings in this country gave so many "saved" and so many "sanctified," and when Asbury made his last trip through the South, the burden of his message was the instantaneous experience of entire sanctification. Several of the old Disciplines earnestly urge the preachers to preach sanctification as an instantaneous second work of grace. And yet, while this view has persisted in groups within the large branches of Methodism and also in small Churches which have separated from them, it has never been able to get a hold upon the general Methodist conscience. In the words of Dr. H. C. Sheldon:

> It [Methodism] has also been characterized generally by a disposition to place very high the ideal of possible religious attainment in this life. This ideal has been described under such terms as "perfect love" and "entire sanctification." Few Methodists would count it appropriate to strive for any lesser attainment. But a real conviction of the legitimacy of formally professing the possession of the high estate has been practically rather the property of a school in Methodism than of Methodism as a whole. In recent decades this has been very evidently the case.

Why is this? Why has the experience, variously designated "the second blessing," "entire sanctification," "the second work of grace," "the baptism of the Spirit," and "baptism for service," dropped out, or rather never been able to get a general hold upon Methodism? Because experience, the great trier of all doctrines, theories, and suppositions, has found that the profession of entire sanctification as an instantaneous work does not stand the test of reality.

As a general theory it does not work. People who profess it soon find that they are subject to the same temptations that Christians generally have, and members who are "entirely sanctified" do not display greater wisdom or piety than those who are not. "Your son Thomas," some one remarked to Mrs. Carlyle, "is a great man, a very great man." "Yes, mon," replied the old lady in broad Scotch, "but he's awful to live with!" Observation shows that "sanctified" people are not any more blessed with "sweet reasonableness" than other Christians. It is well for all to keep in mind the warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The fault in many Christians is a lack of consecration, and this is a fault that may, and should be, remedied. But many inclinations which are abused and made the occasion of sin are essential to human nature and cannot be removed without destroying the man himself. If an artificer should find an iron stain upon the surface of a block of granite, and undertake to polish it away, he might find that the stain ran all through and would not come out until the entire block was worn away. So with many qualities of the "Adamic nature." And yet there is no limit to devotion. It is right and practicable for every Christian to love God with all the heart, and his neighbor as himself. Scriptural holiness is an essential Methodist doctrine. If a man is a Christian, he should live a Christian life.

CHAPTER X

OBLIGATIONS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

All who have the mind of Christ, or are seeking it, should be in the Church. Wesley declares that the Bible knows nothing of "a solitary religion." His objection to the mysticism of William Law and others was that it made religion solely a matter of communion with God and neglected the relation of the Christian to other Christians and to his fellow man. "Directly opposite to this," he says, "is the gospel of Christ. Solitary religion is not to be found there. . . . The gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness."

And, if it is the duty of every man who has the spirit of Christ to unite with the Church, it is equally the duty of the Church to put no barrier in the way. The Church is not an organization belonging to Methodists, or Baptists, or Presbyterians; it is the Church of God. And therefore no organization claiming to be a a Church has a right to lay down conditions of membership that God himself does not lay down. The one thing that makes a man acceptable to God and a fellow citizen with the saints is the possession of the spirit of Jesus Christ. This should, therefore, be the one thing that admits a man into the fellowship of the Church. Nothing should exclude a man from the Church militant on earth that will not exclude him from the Church triumphant in heaven.

With this principle in view, the General Rules, which

have been in effect in Methodism from the beginning, declare that "there is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.'" "These Rules," says Bishop Mouzon, "are the recognized terms of Church membership throughout Methodism"; and Dr. Abel Stevens says of them, "They are remarkable as not containing a single dogmatic condition of communion." Every honest soul in serious earnest about salvation has a rightful place in the Methodist Church.

When Methodism first arose, it was not a Church, but only a religious society loosely affiliated with the Established Church, and as a mere society it had a right to adopt any conditions of membership that the organizers might select. There is no limit to the privilege of forming social organizations, so long as the rights of the public are not infringed upon, and any group of people may start a society with articles of association which set forth the purposes of the organization and the qualifications for membership. Many such societies have been formed with religious aims, and so long as a group thus formed remains only a society it has a perfect right to make demands upon its members that would exclude the great majority of Christians. It might prescribe a strict regimen controlling diet and habits of living. It might require all members to be vegetarians, or to refrain from all forms of recreation and amusement, or to dress in white, or to wear red ties. A mere society may be as exact and freakish as it likes in regulating the habits and conduct

of its members, and nobody has a right to object, because membership in any such social organization is voluntary. But when a society becomes a Church or claims to be a Church it is no longer a private or group concern, for the Church is a divine institution which makes its appeal to the whole of humanity, and therefore conditions of membership must not be determined by the whim of leaders, but by the will of God. On the other hand, when a Church lays down conditions of membership that conscientious Christians cannot comply with; when it demands the acceptance of a creed that many Christians cannot believe, or requires a mode of baptism which many Christians believe to be contrary to the scriptural mode, it unchurches itself and becomes a sect or section of the great Church, appealing only to Christians of a certain type of mind and not to all who have the spirit of Jesus Christ. For this reason the Church which claims to be the only truly catholic Church is the most sectarian of all Churches. When Roman Catholicism demands unqualified acceptance of all its creeds and unquestioning obedience to the pope, it excludes all the vital Christianity of Protestantism, cuts itself off from the Church universal, and becomes a sect.

Although Methodism was at first only a society, it aimed at catholicity from the very beginning. It never intended to adopt any requirements for membership that any honest Christian could not meet; and when the societies became Churches, first in the United States and then in England, they did not mean to depart from the principle of catholicity. Methodism has never

been a sect. When John Wesley was nearly eighty-five years old, he wrote in his Journal:

> There is no religious society under heaven which requires nothing of men in order to their admission into it but a desire to save their souls. Look all round you; you cannot be admitted into the Church or society of the Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Quakers, or any others, unless you hold the same opinions with them and adhere to the same mode of worship. The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion; but they think and let think. Neither do they impose any particular mode of worship; but you may continue to worship in your former manner, be it what it may. Now, I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is allowed, or has been allowed, since the age of the apostles. Here is our glorying, and a glorying peculiar to us. What society shares it with us?

In "Fundamentals of Methodism," Bishop Mouzon quotes from Wesley's Journal the following sentence, which was written under date of August 26, 1789, and calls special attention to the use of the word "Church":

> I then met the society and explained at large the nature and rise of Methodism; and still aver, I have never read or heard of, either in ancient or modern history, any other Church which builds on so broad a foundation as the Methodists do; which requires of its members no conformity either in opinions or modes of worship, but barely this one thing, to fear God and work righteousness.

It must be kept in mind that these words were written nearly five years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America; that Wesley regarded Methodism as one the world over and himself as the head of the movement; that American Methodists

of its members, and nobody has a right to object, because membership in any such social organization is voluntary. But when a society becomes a Church or claims to be a Church it is no longer a private or group concern, for the Church is a divine institution which makes its appeal to the whole of humanity, and therefore conditions of membership must not be determined by the whim of leaders, but by the will of God. On the other hand, when a Church lays down conditions of membership that conscientious Christians cannot comply with; when it demands the acceptance of a creed that many Christians cannot believe, or requires a mode of baptism which many Christians believe to be contrary to the scriptural mode, it unchurches itself and becomes a sect or section of the great Church, appealing only to Christians of a certain type of mind and not to all who have the spirit of Jesus Christ. For this reason the Church which claims to be the only truly catholic Church is the most sectarian of all Churches. When Roman Catholicism demands unqualified acceptance of all its creeds and unquestioning obedience to the pope, it excludes all the vital Christianity of Protestantism, cuts itself off from the Church universal, and becomes a sect.

Although Methodism was at first only a society, it aimed at catholicity from the very beginning. It never intended to adopt any requirements for membership that any honest Christian could not meet; and when the societies became Churches, first in the United States and then in England, they did not mean to depart from the principle of catholicity. Methodism has never

been a sect. When John Wesley was nearly eighty-five years old, he wrote in his Journal:

> There is no religious society under heaven which requires nothing of men in order to their admission into it but a desire to save their souls. Look all round you; you cannot be admitted into the Church or society of the Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Quakers, or any others, unless you hold the same opinions with them and adhere to the same mode of worship. The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion; but they think and let think. Neither do they impose any particular mode of worship; but you may continue to worship in your former manner, be it what it may. Now, I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is allowed, or has been allowed, since the age of the apostles. Here is our glorying, and a glorying peculiar to us. What society shares it with us?

In "Fundamentals of Methodism," Bishop Mouzon quotes from Wesley's Journal the following sentence, which was written under date of August 26, 1789, and calls special attention to the use of the word "Church":

> I then met the society and explained at large the nature and rise of Methodism; and still aver, I have never read or heard of, either in ancient or modern history, any other Church which builds on so broad a foundation as the Methodists do; which requires of its members no conformity either in opinions or modes of worship, but barely this one thing, to fear God and work righteousness.

It must be kept in mind that these words were written nearly five years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America; that Wesley regarded Methodism as one the world over and himself as the head of the movement; that American Methodists

received their Articles of Religion and the "Sunday Service" from the hands of Wesley and considered him as their spiritual father; and that Wesley had already ordained preachers in England in order that the perpetuation of the movement as a Church might be assured. From these facts it may certainly be inferred that Wesley never intended to lay down any conditions for membership in the Church that had not already been laid down in the General Rules for membership in the societies, and that the ritual for use in the baptism of adults and in the reception of members was not intended to impose any conditions that were not clearly implied in the General Rules. In coming into the Church, a Methodist simply formally assumes the obligations which were informally acknowledged by every member of an early society. The conditions of membership have not changed. There is nothing in the baptismal service or in the service for the reception of members that may not be expected to accompany a determination "to fear God and work righteousness," nothing that goes beyond the requirements of the General Rules.

Methodism did not begin as a society for ethical culture. It was emphatically a religious movement; and not only religious, but positively and distinctively Christian. The eight or ten persons, who came to Wesley in London "in the latter end of the year 1739," "appeared to be deeply convinced of sin and earnestly groaning for redemption." They desired that he would spend some time with them "in prayer" and advise them how to "flee from the wrath to come," and they

"always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities."

This was the rise of the UNITED SOCIETY, first in *Europe*, and then in *America*. Such a society is no other than "*a company of men* having the form and seeking the power of *godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.*"

These early Methodists were not beginning *de novo* with the intention of producing a new religion. They believed in the religion of the Old and New Testaments, thus being "distinguished from Jews, Turks, and infidels." They had the "form of godliness," received and acknowledged by all Christians, and were seeking its "power." They were united to "pray together," believing in prayer and in God who answers prayer. They were ready to receive the word of exhortation, believing that God was the source of that word. They were ready to help each other to work out their salvation, believing in salvation and in all that salvation implies. Their "desire to flee from the wrath to come" implied a belief in the judgment of a holy God; their desire "to be saved from their sins" implied a belief in the God against whom they had sinned. They were not to take "such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus," thus acknowledging Jesus as the rightful Lord of their lives; nor to sing those songs or read those books which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God, thus recognizing God as the supreme object of their devotion. They were to take up their cross daily, submit to "bear

the reproach of Christ," and expect men to say "all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord's sake." They were also to attend upon public worship, hear the Bible read and expounded, search the Scriptures, and pray. A great wealth of doctrine was implied in the General Rules.

What, then, does Wesley mean by saying that Methodism requires nothing of people for membership but "a desire to save their souls"? What can Stevens mean when he says that the General Rules do not contain "a single dogmatic condition of communion"? They mean to say that every truth implied in the General Rules is accessible to experience, and that only those truths of which an experiential knowledge may be obtained are necessary to salvation. The whole realm of speculative theology remains optional, but the theology of the General Rules consists of the vital truths that underlie Christian experience. "*And all these*," says the Discipline of the General Rules, "*we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts.*" That is to say, the Methodist Church requires of its members neither less nor more than the Christian conscience requires.

When a person stands before a congregation to be received into the Methodist Church, he is asked two questions. The first is: "Do you solemnly, in the presence of God and this congregation, ratify and confirm the promise and vow of repentance, faith, and obedience, contained in the baptismal covenant?" What is this vow of repentance, faith, and obedience? Turning back to the service for the administration of baptism,

we find each of the three terms explained in order. The candidate for baptism is told that he must faithfully promise that he "will renounce the devil and all his works" (repentance), "constantly believe God's holy word" (faith), and "obediently keep his commandments" (obedience). The terms are further explained in three corresponding questions, the first of which is:

> Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow or be led by them?

The devil is the exponent of evil, sin, and wrong. No Christian can desire or promise less than to turn away from all sin and wrong and to turn with all the heart to God and all good. He must shun the vanity of the world in order to avoid worshiping the creature rather than the Creator; he must repress the desires of the flesh and keep his body under. This determination is expressed formally in the answer: "I renounce them all."

The second question explains what it means to "believe God's holy word." It contains the substance of the Apostles' Creed, which is a convenient, though necessarily incomplete, summary of the revelation of God and the way of salvation contained in the Bible. When the candidate is asked this question, he is called upon simply to declare that he claims for his own the great facts and principles which come to light in the gospel. The Church does not intend for this question to lead the unsophisticated mind into bewildering vistas of metaphysics or to raise disputed historical

questions. It only calls up before the candidate's mind the great peaks of truth, which are the property of the whole of Christendom. For this reason, all may confidently answer: "All this I steadfastly believe."

The last question merely puts the test concerning obedience. "Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?" The answer is: "I will endeavor so to do, God being my helper."

It will be noticed that the second question does not present any one of the several theories of the inspiration of the Bible for acceptance. It does not say whether the verbal, or the plenary, or the dynamic theory is to be held. It is enough to believe that the God who is revealed in the Bible is the true God and that the way of salvation described in it is the true road from earth to heaven. Neither does the question explain that some of the statements contained in the Creed may be taken in a symbolical sense, nor say whether each is to be received as it was understood by those who formed it or as it is interpreted at the present time. Most of the articles, of course, retain their original meaning, but some have changed, and one—"he descended into hell"—has dropped out of the form as it is used in Methodist Churches. It is well known, for instance, that the earliest form of one article was "resurrection of the flesh" in the Church of England, and that this was the form in both the Greek and Latin formulas of the ancient Church. The Latin reads *resurrectionem carnis*, and the word used in the Greek is *sarx*, which is the ordinary word for flesh of

any kind. However, "flesh" was changed to "body" in the Episcopal Church at an early date, and Methodist congregations, when they repeat the creed, declare the belief of the Church in "the resurrection of the body."

"A declaration with regard to certain essential and necessary articles of faith," put forth by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., in 1910, and repeated by two subsequent sessions of that body, has provoked a general discussion of the Virgin Birth. There were five points in the declaration, but only two of them were concerning articles in the Apostles' Creed. This discussion has spread into all Churches, and much bitter feeling has been manifested. Some wise and many unwise things have been said. As the writer was riding in to his office one morning, when the controversy was at its height, he noticed on the bulletin board of a Church an announcement of the subject of the sermon for the following Sunday morning. The preacher proposed to enlighten his congregation on "The Vergin Birth." The writer did not hear the sermon; he thought the preacher's knowledge of the subject would probably be about on a par with his spelling. And there might have been a little of the Pharisee in him, as he thanked God that it was not a Methodist Church.

The article, "born of Mary, virgin," was put into the Apostles' Creed as a symbol of the humanity of Jesus and of his purity. As strange as it may now seem, there were many heretics in the days of ancient Christianity, who denied that Jesus really lived a human life.

Where modern heretics are prone to deny his divinity, ancient heretics were prone to deny his humanity. These Doketists—for so they were called, from the Greek verb, *dokeo*, to seem—declared that Jesus Christ only *seemed* to be born, only seemed to suffer, only seemed to die on the cross. Over against this heresy the Church set this great assertion of the creed. There were also many who believed that no person born in a normal way could be without sin, and this article is a symbol of the sinlessness of Jesus. It declares that there was no impurity in his conception, his birth, or his life. Wordsworth speaks of the man who "would peep and botanize upon his mother's grave." If a grave is a sacred place, any birth chamber is equally so; and how sacred is the birth of the holy child Jesus! To wrangle over that sacred hour, and peep and pry into its mystery, is irreverent, disrespectful, and wrong.

The Methodist Church has no official exposition of the Apostles' Creed. The question concerning it is asked of the educated and uneducated alike, upon the supposition that it can be received whole-heartedly by any man who accepts Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Acceptance of it does not commit the believer in advance to one side of debated philosophical questions or prohibit continued historical investigation. The great affirmations of the Creed do not curtail a man's liberty; they set him free. Furthermore, Methodism does not require of any man anything which would shift the burden from the moral and spiritual to the intellectual realm. It intends to keep the issue clear. The crisis of the soul is a moral crisis. If men refuse the gospel,

it is not because they are asked to believe statements that honest minds cannot accept, but rather because they are unwilling to comply with the gospel's high moral and spiritual demands.

The second question asked of a candidate for Church membership is, "Will you be subject to the discipline of the Church, attend upon its ordinances, and support its institutions?" The first part of this question does not refer so much to certain rules and regulations laid down in a book by an organization for directing the conduct of its members as to the behavior that becomes a follower of Jesus Christ. Since Methodism disowns the sectarian view of the Church, it denies the legitimacy of such a conception as Methodist morality, or Presbyterian morality, or Baptist morality, each determined by the rules that each particular Church may adopt for governing its membership. Methodism holds that "the discipline of the Church" is the regulation of each member's life by the spirit of Jesus Christ. It does not mean that Christians should imitate Jesus. Children imitate their elders, but when they pass from childhood to manhood they cease to imitate and begin to act according to their own ideals. No Christian should try to imitate Jesus by copying his outward acts. No Christian can imitate Jesus. But just as Jesus had his own proper life to live and work to do, and was led and sustained by the Spirit of God, so every Christian has his place and work, and may be sustained by the same divine Spirit, so that he will live as a Christian should.

The discipline of the Church means that Christians

do not have the same standard of conduct as people of the world. With the world it is a point of honor for a man to resent an insult. In the old days, men who had been offended felt that they were in honor bound to challenge the offender to fight a duel. But the Christian may not knock down the man that offers him an insult or pay back the man that does him a wrong, because he is under the discipline of the spirit of him "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again."

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Since conditions change, there are some practices that may be harmful in one age and harmless in another. Some things are wrong in themselves, while other things are wrong only in abuse or because of other things to which they may lead. For this reason, the Church cannot lay down specific rules for the regulation of the lives of its members, as the officers of an army might for the soldiers. Of course, if a thing is wrong *per se*, the Church must forbid it, both for its own sake and for the sake of the member whose life would be injured by the evil practice. But when a thing is wrong only in the abuse that may be made of it, the Church cannot lay down a strict rule in prohibition of it, because it has no right to make wrong that which the Head of the Church has not made wrong, nor to require what the

Head does not require. For this reason, while there are many things that are clearly wrong, and therefore forbidden in the Ten Commandments and in other parts of the Bible, things that the Church must forbid and condemn, there are other things that the Church can only advise upon, or advise strongly against, because, while they are often abused, there is nothing essentially wrong in them. It is on this neutral ground that difficulties arise. The Christian conscience is perfectly clear on all practices that work injustice or do an injury—such as stealing, lying, killing, and unchastity; but in the field of recreation and amusement, for instance, it is often extremely difficult to say where the good ends and the harm begins. It would be much easier, if parents, teachers, and preachers could lay down definite rules for young people, and tell them just what they may do and what they may not. But the Church has no right to do this, and the young people know it; therefore they will not suffer it. They would lose respect for any Church that did not respect the rights of the individual. And in all matters that are not wrong in themselves the opinions of the mature and experienced should be seriously considered, but each conscience must be permitted to decide for itself.

As a society, Methodism laid down the General Rules not only to guide members in their conduct, but to prohibit them from doing things that are wrong. In their general aspect these rules are good for all time and cover the whole range of Christian thought and action. As great principles, every Christian will admit at once that they should be observed. They are

guarded by the Restrictive Rules and cannot be changed except by the process for changing the constitution. These rules are made to cover three classes of action: Negative, social, devotional. Methodists are required to give evidence of their desire for salvation: First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind; second, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power; third, by attending upon all the ordinances of God. So far, there is no difficulty. Who does not see, and freely ackowledge, that it is his duty to refrain from injuring his fellow man, himself, and God; that he should act the part of a neighbor in trying to be positively helpful in the world; that he should avail himself of the means for growth in grace both for his own improvement and the improvement of others?

But, when the first rule passes from the general principle of avoiding evil of every kind to an enumeration of specific instances, "such as" are generally practiced, complications arise. All agree that there is something peculiarly sacred about "the day of the Lord," but some work must be done on Sunday, and it is often difficult to draw the line between "ordinary work" and necessary work, and no city has ever yet been able to hit upon an entirely satisfactory law regulating "buying and selling" on Sunday. Some preachers, mindful of the caution against "the using of many words in buying or selling," ask the price of an article, and if the price suits them, they take it, and if not they leave it; while others "Jew" the merchant down to the lowest price obtainable. "Doing what we know is not

for the glory of God" is certainly wrong; but when the rule begins to specify, it opens the way for a difference of opinion. Special attention is called to such practices as extravagance in dress, worldly diversions, improper singing and reading, and "laying up treasures upon earth." In the early days many Methodists were very strict in applying the rule against "the putting on of gold and costly apparel." On one occasion a woman who could not enjoy the new circuit rider's first sermon, because she saw a gold button in his shirt front, was greatly relieved, when she went up at the close of the service to rebuke him, to find that the offending ornament was not gold at all, but a splotch of red mud that had splattered on the preacher's shirt front and dried. However, it is not unusual for a preacher to time himself by a gold watch, guarded by a gold chain, while he reads the General Rules, and it is not an altogether unheard-of sight for the rules to be read by the best-dressed person in the congregation. And the people love it so; they like to see their preacher "look nice." And the bishops do not disapprove.

One of the hardest lessons that people have to learn is how to use the world and not abuse it. They must use the world by marrying, eating and drinking, working, and wearing clothes, for otherwise the race would run out. The continual problem is, how to sail between the Scylla of self-indulgence and the Charybdis of asceticism. The ascetic avoids all contact with the world and denies himself all earthly pleasures for fear he may damage his soul. He is like a man who cuts off his toes to guard against the possibility of corns.

On one side John Wesley was as genial as a humanist; on the other, he was as ascetic as a Medieval monk. One of the attractions of work among the Indians was that it would give him an opportunity to live as simply as he liked without being made the subject of adverse comment. "It will be no small thing to be able," he says, "without fear of giving offense, to live on water and the fruits of the earth." He had a mortal fear of "softness and needless self-indulgence" and exhorted Methodists to avoid them as they would a plague. On the other hand, he was charming in conversation and enjoyed social life, and at times he was not entirely indifferent to creature comforts and the pleasures of the palate. One day he was among the guests of a housewife who had displayed her skill in the culinary art by preparing an unusually elegant dinner. It happened that one of the brothers present was lamenting the lack of self-denial among the preachers, just as the guests were sitting down to the table, and Wesley dryly remarked that the brother had a good opportunity right then to begin to encourage self-denial by setting a good example. The Methodists gave him great distress by regarding so lightly his rule concerning dress. In the sermon on "Obedience to Pastors," he says:

> Do you then take my advice (I ask in the presence of God and all the world) with regard to *dress?* I published that advice above thirty years ago; I have repeated it a thousand times since. I have advised you not to be conformable to the world herein, to lay aside all needless ornaments, to avoid all expense, to be patterns of plainness to all around you. Have you taken

this advice? Have you all, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, laid aside all those needless ornaments which I particularly objected to? Are you all exemplarily plain in your apparel: as plain as Quakers (so-called), or Moravians? If not, if you are still dressed like the generality of people of your rank and fortune, you declare hereby, to all the world, that you will not obey them that are over you in the Lord. You declare, in open defiance of God and man, that you will not *submit yourselves* to them. Many of you carry your sins on your forehead, openly, and in the face of the sun. You harden your hearts against instruction and against conviction. You harden one another; especially those of you that were once convinced and have now stifled your convictions. You encourage one another to stop your ears against the truth and shut your eyes against the light; lest haply you should see that you are fighting against God and against your own souls. If I were now called to give an account of you, it would be "with groans and not with joy." And sure that would be "unprofitable for you": the loss would fall upon your own head.

Wesley had many poor, humble, ignorant, and untrained people under his care, and he keenly felt his responsibility for them. Many of them were grown in years, but children in wisdom and experience, and needed to be told what to eat, what to wear, and how to spend their time and money. But if there was anything the great leader did not understand, it was women. In spite of all his warnings and exhortations, the sisters just would wear ribbons and curl their hair. And no wonder; it is as natural for a woman to make herself attractive as it is for a rose to bloom. Many of Wesley's preachers were uneducated men, who had been called from their trades to the work of the ministry. They needed strict supervision in everything, even their

daily habits, and their leader and employer did not hesitate to lay down rules for regulating their lives even in the most personal matters and to minute details. They could not get married without the advice and consent of the Conference. One of the questions asked at an early Conference was, "Is it not a shame for a preacher to be found in bed at 6 o'clock in the morning?" The emphatic answer was: "It is." But, of course, some men cannot live by the clock and do their best work.

The following resolution, presented by Thomas Griffin and S. Patton was adopted by the General Conference of 1832:

> Whereas, there is a diversity among ourselves and our people, and it is to be feared there is a strong tendency among ourselves and our charges to a conformity to the world on the subject of dress; therefore,
>
> *Resolved*, That the Committee on Itinerancy be requested to examine into the subject and report.

There was "a diversity" then, and there is a diversity now. In fact, it appears from Wesley's vain effort to make the early Methodists dress simply, there has been a diversity from the beginning.

Methodism has tried hard to become a sect. Many have earnestly endeavored to make Methodists a "peculiar" people, with customs to distinguish them from "the generality of people," and to shunt them off from the great highway of humanity into a provincial piety, which may be recognized by some outward badge, such as the shape of the hat or the cut of the clothing. By their garb ye shall know them. Many

religious movements have gone this way, only to flourish for a time and then disappear; for while the old people have been proud of the dress because of its simplicity, the young people have been ashamed of it because of its oddity, and in two or three generations the movement either runs out or lays aside its marks of peculiarity. But Methodism refused to be stranded upon the shoals and shallows of freakishness, because it was burdened with a world mission and destined for a world career. As the early Church, which was tempted to become a pious Jewish sect quietly waiting for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, was rescued from the Judaizing Christians and sent upon its world-wide mission of salvation, so Methodism was saved from freaks and cranks, who delighted in singularity in doctrine and practice and prophesied the end of the world, and sent along its way of carrying its message of conscious salvation to all mankind. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink—and dress—but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The world is ever with us, and the problem of contact with it comes to each succeeding generation. The ascetic, heeding the warning to "flee worldly lusts," takes himself to a hermit's cell. And it is better, infinitely better, to sever all connection with human society than to succumb to the temptations of worldliness. But Christians are in the world to save it, and to save the whole of it. The greatest task of each generation is to lead the incoming generation into the way of life. Of course, it would simplify the work of the Church wonderfully, if it could lay down specific rules

concerning recreation and amusements and compel the young people to follow them. But it cannot. The only way is to watch over each soul and "practice by the case." For this reason,

> 'Tis not a cause of small import
> The pastor's care demands.

The meaning of the remainder of the second question put to candidates for Church membership is so clear that it does not require explanation. It is obviously the duty of each member to keep in touch with the Church by attending upon its ordinances. The advantage here is mutual. Without the individual there could be no Church, and without the Church there would be no organ to carry the gospel which quickens the spiritual life of the individual. While God directly touches the life of each person, he cannot say all he would like to say apart from the collective thought of the organization. As each member makes his contribution to the whole, the wisdom of the group is increased, and the life and thought of the group become in turn a corrective of the life and thought of the individual. Paul tells the Church at Rome that he desires to visit them, "that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." If the chief apostle felt the need of Christian fellowship, we may be sure that we need it also.

A loyal member of the Church will, of course, give it his moral and financial support. The Church is the greatest and most beneficial coöperative enterprise in the world. Its mission is "doing good of every possible

sort, and as far as possible, to all men: to their bodies," and "to their souls." It has no way of raising funds for carrying on its work except through voluntary contributions, and each member should consider it a privilege as well as a duty to have a share in the work. A great and large organization like the Methodist Church must necessarily develop a good deal of machinery for carrying out its wide and varied program, and many officers will be required to do the work successfully. It sometimes seems to the individual that the General Conference has made a mistake in its plans and that officers might act with greater wisdom. And such no doubt is often the case. The law-making body of the Church is not above criticism, and the officers elected by it are not infallible. But a loyal member will criticize from within, and humbly, and not as the Philistines. He will aim to help, and not to hurt, remembering that whatever damages the Church injures himself, society, and the world. "Don't knock."

CHAPTER XI

SCHOLARSHIP AND SCIENCE

It has been maintained throughout this discussion that the essential element in Christianity is the mind of Christ. Where the spirit of Jesus is, there is a Christian. It is this spirit that regulates thought and conduct and determines the privileges that a Christian may enjoy. How far is this principle to be carried? I answer: Absolutely all the way! There is no field of literary, historical, philosophical, theological, or scientific investigation into which a Christian may not confidently go. There is no fact, or truth, or principle that is exempt from careful examination. There is no provisional theory or hypothesis, whether it turns out in the end to be true or erroneous, that a Christian may not hold, provided it does not contradict the truth necessarily implied in the possession of the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The essence of all true religion is contained in an attitude of devotion to God and love to man. All truth is God's truth, and the Christian may enter into every realm of fact without fear that he may stray into forbidden paths or discover something that will destroy his faith. He need not be afraid that there may be facts in history or in nature that can destroy his religion, because the spirit of Jesus is not only a fact, it is the greatest and most significant of all facts; so great that it cannot be overturned, or reversed, or counteracted by anything else that the whole universe

may contain. The spirit of Jesus Christ is not only a supreme fact; it is also the interpretation of the whole realm of reality. This is why no event, or change, or discovery, or advance in knowledge has ever been able to decrease the significance of Jesus or to weaken his hold upon the world's life. The greater the universe becomes, the larger the accumulation of facts grows, the more insistent becomes the demand for interpretation. Says Dr. Fosdick in "Christianity and Progress":*

> Is it not plain why religion has such an unbreakable hold upon the human mind? The funeral of Christianity has been predicted many times, but each time the deceased has proved too lively for the obsequies. In the middle of the eighteenth century they said that Christianity had one foot in the grave, but then came the amazing revival of religious life under the Wesleys. In the middle of the last century one wiseacre said, "In fifty years your Christianity will have died out"; yet, for all our failures, probably Christianity in all its history has never made more progress than in the last half century. If you ask why, one reason is clear: man cannot live in a universe of uninterpreted facts. The scientific approach to life is not enough. It does not cover the ground. Men want to know what life spiritually means, and they want to know that it "means intensely, and means good." Facts alone are like pieces of irritating grit that get into the oyster shell; the pearl of life is created by the interpretations which the facts of life educe.

Among the many facts of history, there are books, and among books there is one called *ho biblos*, the book, or the Bible. The Bible is the product of a movement of God toward man and a corresponding movement of

*Fleming H. Revell Company, publishers, New York.

man toward God. It is the book in which God and man find each other. It is a record of God's revelation of himself to man and of man to himself. Man does not clearly understand the character and purpose of God except as he finds them revealed in the Bible, nor does he fully know himself except in the light of the searching rays of Bible truth. The message of the Bible is true and permanently significant, because holy men spake as they were moved by the Spirit of God. When Elijah thought that "the word of the Lord" came to him, telling him to go down to meet Ahab in Naboth's vineyard, he thought true; there was no illusion about it. When Jeremiah declares that "the word of the Lord" came to him, telling him that he had been ordained "a prophet unto the nations," he is uttering a truth of moral consciousness as certain as moral reality. To deny that the messages of the prophets were received from God is to deny all communion between God and man and to take away all significance and worth from human life.

But it is equally certain that the writers of the Bible used human language, that they exercised their faculties of observation and memory, and that the light of divine truth, as it comes to us, filters through human minds. Luke tells Theophilus, in the opening words of his Gospel, that since many had undertaken to give an orderly account of the facts and truths of the gospel, "it seemed good" to him also to do the same thing, because he had taken pains to ascertain the facts. The pagan view of inspiration, as expressed by Plato and others, is that God speaks through the

passive medium of the prophet and that the word is most truly divine when the prophet is "beside himself," or "out of his mind," The Bible view is that the "word of the Lord" is clearest when all the moral and intellectual faculties are most thoroughly alive.

The Bible is not only a book; it is also a small library, composed of the choicest literature of the Hebrew people. And as a fact in the field of literature it is subject to study and examination by means of the canons of literary criticism which are applied to the literary products of all ages and peoples. "Biblical Criticism," as defined by Dr. J. M. P. Smith, is "the art of accurately determining the origin, purpose, and meaning of the Biblical literature." The critical study of literature, which began with an examination into the composition and authorship of the classic products of Greece and Rome, was certain sooner or later to reach the greatest literary masterpiece of all history and apply to the Old and New Testaments the same tests. Scientific scholarship in its search for facts had to take account of the greatest of all literary facts—the Bible.

The Church does not resent this kind of Bible study; it welcomes it. For the Bible cannot suffer through investigation; the closest examination, so far from diminishing its worth, will only serve to reveal its true greatness. A man in possession of a gold coin which he knows to be genuine will welcome the acid test. It is only when he suspects its genuineness that he desires to keep the metal out of the goldsmith's hands. Let the literary critic examine the book of books and endeavor to estimate its value. There is no danger

that the pure gold will turn to baser metal under his microscopic eye. The Church not only welcomes such study; it heartily joins in and provides its scholars with facilities for it. In its seminaries, universities, and colleges, there are many trained teachers and investigators who are giving their time to a thorough study of the Bible and acquainting the Church and public with the results through books, magazines, and lectures. Methodism is behind no other Church in this field. In England, Canada, and Australia, and in the United States, both North and South, Methodist scholars are making valuable contributions to the literature upon the Bible and winning world-wide recognition through their scholarship.

At an earlier time the Church made the mistake of opposing scholarship. After acting as the schoolmaster of Europe for a millennium and preserving learning in its monasteries throughout the night of Medievalism, the Roman Catholic Church turned against the scholars when they began to throw light upon its practices and doctrines through the Bible. "If the Church arrays itself against learning," said Erasmus, "it makes Christianity synonymous with ignorance." Nor has Protestantism shown greater wisdom in dealing with scholars until comparatively recent times. Even in our own country, the churches have not always understood that earnest and competent scholarship is a true ally of the Christian religion.

But the time has come when the Church would not oppose, if it could, and could not, if it would, because the general public has become acquainted with

the questions raised by scholarship, and people will learn of them either through the enemies of the Bible or through its friends. W. P. King pertinently asks, "Are we to allow the enemies of the Bible to make known to the people some facts about the Bible which we know and withhold?" The same writer also says:

> We are beginning to learn that the facts of life are the friends of life and are not to be resisted, but defended. We are to be worthy followers of Him who has given us his own life mission: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth."

The scientific study of the Bible and all other ancient literature is divided into two branches. The first is known as Lower, or Textual, Criticism; and the second is called Higher, or Literary, Criticism. In a general way, it may be said that the object of the Lower Criticism is to ascertain what a document *says*, and of the Higher Criticism, what it *means*. One man may write a matter-of-fact letter in a poor, illegible hand, and another may write a subtle and ironic letter in a perfectly clear hand. The reader of the former will have no difficulty whatever in ascertaining what the writer *means*, if he can only make out what he *says*, while the reader of the latter will know at once what the writer *says*, but he may not be sure what he means by what he says. Lower Criticism will attempt to decipher the hieroglyphics of the abominable hand, while the Higher Criticism will undertake to get at the meaning of the dark sayings through a knowledge of the writer and his general manner of thought and style of writing.

The purpose of the Lower Criticism is to establish the text of the Bible. It is "lower" in the sense that it is basic, for it is obviously impossible to find out what the Bible means unless we know what it says. A vast amount of work has been done in this important field, and, thanks to the lower critics, the text has been so corrected through a careful comparison of manuscripts that scholars now come nearer to knowing the exact words used by each Biblical writer than the scholars of any former age. The oldest known manuscript of the Old Testament was copied in the ninth century, and the oldest New Testament manuscript in the fourth. These were made from copies, which had been made from other copies, and in this process of repeated copying errors crept in, so that the thousands of manuscripts now in existence present innumerable variations. "The critic must examine these minutely, determine their relative ages and habitats, group them accordingly, and estimate aright their contribution toward the discovery of the correct text."

The work of the lower critic is so generally regarded as legitimate that it is now hard to realize that he had to fight his way in the face of intense opposition. The Textus Receptus, which is the Greek text used in producing the King James translation, was prepared by Erasmus and got its name from the words, *Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum* (Therefore you have the text now received by all), which were written in the preface of the second edition in 1633. Dr. A. T. Robertson says that Erasmus did his work on the text, which became *textus receptus*, in great haste, and that

he used late manuscripts containing many variations from the old manuscripts that have since come to light. But those words, "Received Text," caught the ear, and it took the scholars a long time to break their spell. Dr. Gregory says, in "The Canon and Text of the New Testament":*

> These ignorant words are what did the mischief and led to two centuries of trouble for textual critics. It was not the case that that was the text received by all, and much less was it the text that should have been received by all. But people, even many who should have known better, whose education should have enabled them to free themselves from the limitations of these publishers, clung to these words, busied themselves with the effort to prove them true, and denounced all who did not agree with them at least as blinded, but sometimes as traitors to the truth, destroyers of the New Testament, and it may be as totally immoral and detestable persons.

All who know anything about textual criticism at all know that it has not injured the Bible, but that it has gone far toward restoring the original Hebrew and Greek. In spite of the support of some scholars of good reputation the *Textus Receptus* gradually gave way before the critical work of such men as Hort and Westcott, until a writer on the subject could say, "The *Textus Receptus* is as dead as Queen Anne." In closing an article in the *Quarterly Review* on this subject, Dr. Robertson says:

> Cambridge was the home of Lightfoot, Westcott, and Hort, as Oxford was the home of Sanday. We owe the modern critical texts chiefly to their great universities, especially Cambridge.

*Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers, New York.

and yet in "Cambridge Biblical Essays" for 1909, page 512, Prof. Valentine Richards says of the text of Erasmus, Stephens, Elzevir, the Textus Receptus: "It was reproduced with conscientious care by the late Dr. Scrivener, and his edition is still being printed by the University Press at Cambridge, while the slightly revised version of Estienne's third edition published by Mill at the Clarendon Press in 1707 is still the standard in the sister university." But all the same, Prof. C. H. Turner of Oxford is right. The Textus Receptus is as dead as Queen Anne. No one now turns to it in any real argument any more than one turns to the Authorized Version for any crucial matter. In any pinch one wants the truth, the real text, if he can get it. No one thinks that Westcott and Hort have been able to reproduce the original Greek text at every point. But they have left the Textus Receptus so far behind that it is out of the running. Research will go on, and no trouble will be wasted that will help us get closer to the autograph copies of the books of the New Testament.

However, the problem raised by variations in manuscripts concerns the critical scholar with his love of accuracy rather than the ordinary Bible student or even the theologian. While the exact reading of many passages is in doubt, each Biblical writer expresses his thought so often and in such a variety of ways that it is not difficult to get at his meaning, and this is especially true of the whole drift and tenor of the Bible. Theological differences have not arisen from different readings, but from different interpretations of texts that are undisputed. A Protestant with a Roman Catholic Bible in his hand will be confirmed in his position, while a Roman Catholic will find in the Protestant Bible substantially what he finds in his own. The Douay Version, translated into English from the Latin Vulgate

a few years before the King James Version appeared, and now circulated with the approval of the Roman Catholic authorities, contains essentially the same matter that any other translation does, with the additional apocryphal books, which, however, do not affect the general teachings of the Bible.

The Bible is an inspired book; God speaks in it and through it with unmistakable clearness. It is also a providential book; it has been selected and set apart from all other literature under divine guidance, as the canon, or "measuring rod," of truth. But the truth of the Bible, instead of being arranged in systematic form, is diffused throughout the entire book; and when the canon was being selected there were other books in existence containing divine truth also. For this reason, it was not easy in every case to decide just what books should be admitted as Holy Scripture and what should be left out. Esther, the Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes, which were long in dispute, were not officially recognized as genuine and authoritative until the Council of Jamnia in 90 A.D. This Jewish Council closed the Old Testament Canon, selecting only books that had been written in Hebrew and leaving out the apocryphal books which were included in the Septuagint. Protestant Churches accept the decision of this Council and include in their Old Testament only the books of the Hebrew Bible. On the other hand, the Greek Church received the Septuagint as its canon of Old Testament Scripture, and finally the Council of Trent, which was convoked in 1545, placed the

Apocrypha, which had hitherto been held in doubt, on a par with the rest of the Bible.

Near the beginning of the third century, the four Gospels, Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, and the thirteen Epistles of Paul were read in all the Churches and received as sacred, while such books as the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Acts of Paul were read in some of the Churches, but were not generally recognized as of equal authority with the other books. Other books of the New Testament, such as James, Jude, and Revelation, remained in question until the third Council of Carthage, in 397, officially approved the canon which is accepted in all Churches to-day.

Thus the process of selection and elimination went on until the Bible was put into final form. Some books which were left out might have been included without detracting from the sacredness and value of the Bible as a whole. There is much valuable material in the Apocrypha, which Protestants may use to advantage in understanding the period of Jewish history between the Old and the New Testaments. Possibly some might have been omitted without injury; though one would be slow to designate any particular book that might have been spared. The Bible is not like an organism in which each organ has a definite place and function; it is more like an inexhaustible mine with rich ore in every part. The arrangement of the books is neither in chronological, nor in strictly logical, order. The parts are not articulated after the manner of a machine or a living body. The books are not placed in the

English translations in the order in which they come in the Hebrew Bible, and in the Roman Catholic Canon the Hebrew Bible is interspersed with the apocryphal writings. Even if the Bible were an organism, it would not follow that the integrity of Holy Scripture depends upon the retention of every verse just as it was originally written. Surgery has proved that parts of an organism may be removed without seriously impairing its usefulness or endangering its life. One may suffer the loss of a finger and still be a useful member of society, and many can testify that they have been deprived of the vermiform appendix without inconvenience. But the canon of Scripture has long since been closed. It may be taken for granted that those who had upon them the duty of selecting and arranging the books, sought and obtained divine guidance in this superlatively important task, and that they did their work faithfully and well, and it is useless to try at this late date to undo their work with a view to doing it better.

The Higher Criticism is "higher" in the sense that it builds upon the foundation laid by Lower Criticism. The word is not meant to imply that the higher critic arrogantly regards his work as highly superior, nor does the word "criticism" mean that it is the purpose of this kind of study to pick out flaws in the Bible. The object is not destructive, but wholly constructive. The purpose is to learn as much about the Bible as possible.

The aim of the higher critic is to ascertain the authorship of each book, the purpose of the author in writing, the people to whom the book is addressed, and the

relative value of various parts of Scripture. As the critic approaches any part of the Bible, he asks such questions as: What kind of literature is this? Is it poetry or prose? When, and under what circumstances, was it written? Is it history, or story? Did the writer intend only to state facts, or to teach a lesson through his narrative? Is it the product of a single mind, or is it of composite authorship? How far was the writer indebted to his predecessors, and what traces of his work may be found in later literature? How does one psalm or one prophecy compare with another? Is the record of events intended for pure history, or history with a purpose? When two accounts of the same event vary in detail, which bears more marks of historical accuracy? Did Moses write the whole of the Pentateuch, or only part of it? A casual reading discovers passages that he did not write—the account of his own death and the subsequent period of mourning, for instance. Critical scholarship endeavors to find out what came from the pen of the great lawgiver and what must be ascribed to other writers. Did Isaiah write the whole of the book which bears his name, or was part of it written at the close of the Babylonian captivity? Was the book of Daniel written by the prophet of that name, or by an unknown writer in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes? These, and many other similar questions, indicate the task of critical scholarship. They are not irrelevant or irreverent questions, and the Church should welcome all the light that can be shed upon them.

The Bible is not written in the technical language of

a code of law, but in the popular language of daily life, and therefore many of its sayings were not meant to be taken literally. This opens a wide field for literary interpretation and appreciation. A recent editorial in the *Expository Times* says:

The Bible is in some real sense a rule of faith and life, and in another sense it is not and cannot be a rule at all. "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." And that sage advice is immediately countered by, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Which is right? Though in formal contradiction, they are both right; and we must make room in our conduct for the application of both principles. Again, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Right on the heels of that command comes the statement of the other law that "each man shall bear his own burden." Which is right? They are both right, and the second, no less than the first, is a "law of Christ," who bore his own burden as surely as he bore the burdens of other people. Again, "Enter into thy chamber, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father who is in secret," Religion is here a private transaction between the soul and God, and a man is to go about it almost as if he were doing a guilty thing. But on the other hand, we are not to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is," for there is a stimulus in religious companionship which cannot come from religious isolation. Which is right? They are both right; the one duty is as obligatory as the other. Even in the words of our Lord such contradictory injunctions occur. For "I say unto you, Love your enemies." But it was he who also said, "If any man cometh unto me, and *hateth* not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, he cannot be my disciple." What a paradox—that we should love our enemies, and yet hate our parents and children!

The existence of such contradictions and paradoxes in Holy Scripture have a profound religious value, for they drive us,

if we think at all, beyond the letter to the spirit. They show us how impossible it is to rest in isolated words which may only be half-truths or rather truths which, if our life and thinking are to be conducted in a large and generous way, have to be complemented and balanced by other truths. They make us think of life in a big way, as not to be interpreted by any single formula, or indeed by a formula at all, but by a principle which seeks to express itself now in this way, now in that, but always inadequately. Life is too big a thing to be compassed by any single law, except it be the royal law of love, which, well considered, is not a law at all.

When we thus rise from the letter to the spirit, we shall be the less perturbed by the contradictions—and they are not a few—among the historical statements of the Bible. The Lord, we are told in Samuel, moved David to number Israel; but we are just as explicitly told by the chronicler that it was Satan who moved him. Doubtless these are just two different interpretations of the same act: they are not so much contradictory statements of fact as different interpretations of fact. Still, they *are* different; and nothing is gained by closing our eyes to a thing so obvious. The difference is there, whether we refuse to look at it or not. Sometimes, indeed, the differences extend to statements of fact; sometimes even a writer changes his own statements. The historian who tells us that Asa removed the high places (2 Chron. 14: 5) tells us in the very next chapter that he did not remove them (15: 17), and he gives us the same conflicting accounts of Jehoshaphat's attitude to the high places (17: 6; 20: 33). Criticism has a simple solution of these differences; but though it can explain them, it cannot remove or explain them away. The Gospels themselves are full of such perplexities. Mark tells of the healing of a blind man, as Jesus was leaving Jericho, but according to Luke he is approaching Jericho, and according to Matthew there are two blind men. Even in words so important and, one would imagine, so well known as the superscription on the cross, the tradition is not uniform. What does it all mean?

Does it not mean that we must learn to think of the Bible, as of life, in a big way?

In the long ago, a Hebrew psalmist sang, "The heavens declare the glory of God." If he had undertaken to count the stars, he would have found the number to be around six thousand, for nature can be known only through observation, and there were no telescopes in that ancient time with which to pierce the sky and bring into view the countless millions of luminaries beyond the reach of the natural eye. Devout minds in all ages have looked up from nature to nature's God; as they viewed the glory of the visible universe, they exclaimed, "The hand that made it is divine." From the standpoint of an observer standing upon the earth, the sun rises in the east and slowly moves across the sky, while, from the standpoint of the sun, the earth revolves upon its axis every twenty-four hours and moves around the sun within its orbit once a year. From the standpoint of an ancient Hebrew the creation of the world and of the human race took place in a dateless past which did not seem to be more remote than a few thousand years. From the standpoint of geology, the years of the earth's duration must be numbered by millions. Whenever the Bible speaks of nature, it uses the popular language of the time in which it was written and of all times. The opening chapter of Genesis declares that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The question as to *who* made the earth, is answered through inspiration; *how* it was made, through scientific investigation. There is no more conflict between

Genesis and geology than between a description of a sunset and the theory of light. The Biblical writers described nature as they saw it, and all later generations have described it in the same way. The generalizations of one age are not binding upon all subsequent ages. The Ptolemaic theory was based upon observed facts, and when facilities for observation brought other facts to light, it gave way to the Copernican theory of astronomy.

However, the transition did not take place without grave foreboding. The Roman Catholic Church required Galileo to renounce the revelations of his newly discovered telescope, and Luther thus referred to Copernicus: "People gave ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever must devise some new system, which of all systems is of course the very best. This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth."

That the broader and more amiable Melanchthon was no less positive upon this point than his great chief may be seen from his "Elements of Physics," published six years after the death of the scientist from whom the modern system of astronomy takes its name. "The eyes are witnesses," he is quoted by Andrew D. White, as saying, "that the heavens revolve in the space of twenty-four hours; but certain men, either from love of novelty, or to make a display of ingenuity, have concluded that the earth moves." He

thought it showed a "want of honesty and decency to assert such views publicly," and that the example was "pernicious." "It is the part of a good mind," he said, "to accept the truth as revealed by God and acquiesce in it." Many earnest Christians felt the same uneasiness three centuries later when the facts of geology began to be known, because they believed that the foundations of religion were threatened. Others, however, saw that an increasing knowledge of the vastness of the universe must at last lead to greater reverence for God. James Martineau, one of the profoundest thinkers of modern times, wrote in an American journal over fifty years ago:

I conclude, then, that neither of these two modern discoveries —namely, the immense extension of the universe in space and its unlimited development in time—has any effect on the theistic faith, except to glorify it. A tissue of intellectual order infinitely wide, a history of ascending growth immeasurably prolonged, surely open to the human mind which can read them both, everything that can be asked for a spectacle entirely divine. No one, indeed, could ever have supposed that religion was hurt by these discoveries, had not Christendom unhappily bound up its religion with the physics of Moses and Paul. Setting aside any question of authority, and looking with fresh eyes at the reality itself, who would not own that we live in a more glorious universe than they? Who would go to a Herschel and say, "Roof over your stellar infinitudes, and give me back the solid firmament, with its waters above and its clouds beneath; find me again the third story of the heavens, where the apostle heard the ineffable words?" Who would demand of a Darwin, "Blot out your geologic time and take me home again to the easy limits of six thousand years?" Who, I say, not in the interests of science, but in the very hour of his midnight prayer, would wish to look into skies less deep, or to be near a God whose

presence was the living chain of fewer ages? It cannot be denied that the architects of science have raised over us a nobler temple and the hierophants of Nature introduced us to a sublimer worship. I do not say that they alone could ever find for us, if else we knew it not, *who* it is that fills that temple, and what is the inner meaning of its sacred things; for it is not, I believe, through any physical aspect of things, if that were all, but through the human experiences of the conscience and affections, that the living God comes to apprehension and communion with us. But when once he has been found of us—or rather, we of him—it is of no small moment that in our mental picture of the universe an abode should be prepared worthy of a Presence so dear and so august. And never, prior to our day, did "the heavens" more "declare his glory," or the world present a fitter temple for "Him who inhabiteth eternity."

While the Church is concerned with truth in all realms, it makes a grave mistake when it links its destiny with any particular scientific theory. The conclusions of science are not the mark of a "standing or falling Church." Millions of Christians believe that the earth is round like a ball, while some at least, including Voliva, steadfastly maintain that it is "round like a pie." Theories change from time to time, as new facts are discovered, and when the Church has identified itself with scientific conclusions, it has been thrown into panic by discoveries that have made those conclusions uncertain. There is a story of Chicken Little, who ran to the old hen with the cry, "Mother, mother, the sky is falling!" A green leaf had fallen upon its back, and it thought the leaf was a part of the sky. So, when the Church has made a scientific view a part of its essential message and that view has been upset, many have been made to fear for the time that the whole

heaven of divine truth was falling. But religion deals primarily with abiding realities and with the elemental desires of the human heart, and its essential life lies beyond the range of scientific guns. The Church is, therefore, directly concerned with the interests of the spiritual life and only indirectly with scientific theory. In his very valuable book on "Protestantism and Progress,"* Ernst Troeltsch says:

> Religious forces really only proceed from religious motives; and conversely, all the proper and immediate influence of religious innovations is confined to the sphere of religion. That can only be forgotten by an apologetic which cannot summon up courage to deal directly with religious ideas and therefore only ventures to praise religion for its influences in the sphere of civilization; or by an irreligious philosophy of history which cannot believe in the spontaneity and originality of religious ideas, and supposes that the only way to understand them is to unmask behind them the profane forces—preferably political or economic—to which the action is really due. But for every unprejudiced observer the matter really stands exactly as it appears to do: religion is really derived from religion, and the results of its influence are really, in the first place, religious.

Religion thus has its own proper sphere, and the teachers of religion have a field in which they may be certain and secure. But when the leaders of the Church measure swords with experts in science upon their own ground, they invariably suffer discomfiture. It is a simple matter of historic fact that every time the theologians have opposed a great scientific discovery upon doctrinal grounds it has turned out that the scientists were right and the Church wrong. On the other hand,

*G. P. Putnam's Sons, publishers, New York.

it is equally true that when scientists have pitched the battle in the field of the Church and disputed with its leaders over the reality of Christian experience or even over questions of theology or metaphysics, they have been compelled to retire in defeat. When the discussion over questions raised by geology was running high, the great English statesman Gladstone entered the lists as a protagonist for the Bible. But "the grand old man" could not hold his own, because he was contending for a theory that scientific facts had rendered untenable. The opening sentences of Dr. L. M. Sweet, Professor of Christian Theology and Apologetics in the Biblical Seminary in New York, in his book on "To Christ Through Evolution," exactly describe the writer's impression thirty years ago upon reading "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture":*

When I was a youth in college I followed with intense interest the debate between Thomas Henry Huxley and William Ewart Gladstone on the creation narrative in Genesis. I thought then, and I think still, that, with all his consummate ability, and though in a general way he was on what I should call my side, Gladstone had the worst of it, because he occupied and defended an untenable position—namely, that the detailed order of events in Genesis anticipated the judgments of modern science and was, therefore, divinely inspired. Huxley seemed to have no difficulty in showing that the order of events in Genesis and the order of events as interpreted by contemporary science were in conflict in several important particulars. He argued, therefore, on the basis of Gladstone's logic, that Genesis could not be inspired. To me the whole debate, while intensely interesting as a battle of the giants, was entirely irrelevant. My faith in the divine inspiration of Genesis, in spite of the fact that, as I

*George H. Doran Company, publishers, New York.

viewed the conflict, the Bible champion was defeated, was not the least bit shaken, because, as I have said, the discussion itself seemed beside the mark and the outcome of it a matter of indifference. I did not start with Gladstone's premise, and, therefore, I did not land in Huxley's negative conclusion.

The controversy over evolution, which began early in the second half of the nineteenth century and continued for nearly a generation, has been revived in recent years, especially in America. The General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church has declared by resolution that the Mosaic account of creation was intended to be taken literally; some Baptist State Conventions have demanded that all teachers in colleges supported by them sign a statement to the effect that they do not believe in evolution; and several States have passed laws prohibiting the teaching of the evolutionary theory in tax-supported institutions.

Upon this theory the Bible has nothing directly to say, for the simple reason that neither evolution nor any other scientific theory of creation had been so much as dreamed of when the Bible was written. The Bible clearly reveals the Creator and sets forth the relation between God and nature, but the *process* of creation is a subject for scientific investigation. The Methodist Church has wisely refrained from committing itself as a Church to any particular scientific theory.

CHAPTER XII

METHODISM AND PROGRESS

THERE is nothing more certain than the fact of change. Individuals change. Governments, institutions, and organizations do not remain the same from age to age. Solar systems have their birth, growth, and decay; planets revolve around their central suns; and the whole sidereal universe moves with lightning-like rapidity upon its mysterious way. "There is nothing constant but change."

Philosophers have long taken account of this obvious fact and tried to make a place for it in their systems of thought. Twenty-five hundred years ago Heraclitus of Ephesus based his system on the principle of becoming. "Nothing," he said, "remains the same; all comes and goes, resolves itself and passes into other forms; out of all comes all, from life, death, from the dead, life; there is everywhere and eternally only this one process of the alternation of birth and decay." When Plato reckoned with the fact of change, he attributed it to the unavoidable imperfection of a transient and temporal world, above which he placed an eternally stable world of ideas. In his view, the true aim of the soul is to allow itself to be affected as little as possible by the world of time and to wait patiently for its release into eternity.

Many have taken this attitude of resistance toward change. They regret it as a fact, regard it as an evil, and contrast it with the permanent, which they consider divine. Since changes in this world are inevitable,

they are deeply impressed with the vanity of all earthly things and feel that they can only approximate perfection here, making it the purpose of life to avoid changes as much as possible and give to their institutions the resemblance of a changeless eternity.

Others welcome change as the law of life and accept it as divine. Instead of saying with Heraclitus, "All floats," they say with Bergson, "All lives." They believe that they are in a vital universe and that life means growth, which cannot take place without change. In the words of Dr. David H. Aston:

> There are two philosophies back of all our thinking. One assumes a fixed universe, predestined from all eternity—a crystal in which we must exist—whether we live or not. The other assumes a fluid universe, an "ever-flowing stream, moving under the changeless law of change, forever moving." Always alive, alert, vital. At rest at the heart of things as we go, we nevertheless keep on going, to-day coming out of yesterday, to-morrow out of to-day—an endless process. Life everywhere. The Holy Spirit fulfilling the promise of Jesus, taking his things and showing them to us as we are able to learn. This is not yet the best of all worlds, but it will be when God is through with it, through with it only to move on to a yet better.

In his book on "Creative Evolution," Henri Bergson follows the stream of life as it branches out into three forms, each of which is determined by the effort of the organism to adjust itself to its changing environment. The tree thrusts its roots into the ground and gets its nourishment directly from the soil and air. Since it does not have to roam in search of food or seek shelter from wind and rain, its problem of life is solved, and it remains in a state of torpor. The animal roams

at large and adjusts itself to changing circumstances, but all the tools it fashions and uses are in the organism itself, so that it is shut up to instinctive and automatic action. Its tools are perfect, because they are a part of the organism, but they are necessarily few in number and incapable of instantaneous improvement in the face of sudden change. Man, on the other hand, makes and discards his tools at will. His instruments cost effort, they are imperfect and troublesome to handle, but they "can take any form whatever, serve any purpose, free the living being from every new difficulty that arises and bestow on it an unlimited number of powers."

While it is inferior to the natural instrument for the satisfaction of immediate wants, its advantage over it is the greater, the less urgent the need. Above all, it reacts on the nature of the being that constructs it; for in calling on him to exercise a new function, it confers on him, so to speak, a richer organization, being an artificial organ by which the natural organ is extended. For every need that it satisfies, it creates a new need; and so, instead of closing, like instinct, the round of action within which the animal tends to move automatically, it lays open to activity an unlimited field into which it is driven farther and farther and made more and more free. But this advantage of intelligence over instinct only appears at a late stage, when intelligence, having raised construction to a higher degree, proceeds to construct constructive machinery. At the outset, the advantages and drawbacks of the artificial instrument and of the natural instrument balance so well that it is hard to foretell which of the two will secure to the living being the greater empire over nature.*

*"Creative Evolution," Henri Bergson; translated by A. Mitchell. Henry Holt & Company, publishers, New York.

But what has this to do with the Church? Much every way. It would seem at first glance to be a great advantage for the Church to have been able at an early time to put its dogmas into final form and to achieve fixedness of organization. It would then need to give itself no further concern about doctrine or method, and there would be no fear that it might ever be caught out in the rain, for like the terrapin it would always carry its house around with it on its back. Many think that the Church should finally settle all debatable doctrinal and moral issues and go to the public with an air of dogmatic infallibility. And that is exactly what the Greek Orthodox Church did. It cast its doctrines into final form long ago, and doctrinal questions have given it no concern for fifteen hundred years. Consequently it is "Orthodox"—and dead. The Roman Catholic Church fixed its creeds and form of organization with theoretical finality, but made room for growth by allowing a development of the doctrine that was implicit in the creeds. In this way, that Church has retained a measure of elasticity so that it has not entirely lost its hold upon the world's thought and life. And yet the handicap of finality and infallibility rests upon all Roman Catholic scholars, and they are not able to enter heartily into the work of furthering the progress of the world.

Change may, of course, be bad. Institutions can go backward as well as forward. But change may mean progress, and certainly there can be no progress without it. The world is not as it should be; it is not as any lover of God and man would desire it. The Church

has never been final, and in a world of growth and change it can never be final. If it had congealed into fixedness at any period, it would have been left behind, while the whole world around it moved on. There has come a great awakening in the life of the world in recent years, and only those Churches that take notice of this mighty impetus toward a greater fullness of living and adjust themselves to the current of progress can hope to retain their influence and lead a restless generation into the ways of peace. A writer in a magazine of the Established Church of England recently stated the issue faced by that Church and all Churches, in these words:

> If the Christian religion is presented in a form that is truthful, progressive, predominantly moral and practical, England will remain a Christian country; but if that form be obscurantist, dogmatic, reactionary, England will become, like France, a nation of which the great part of the male population is frankly skeptical if not actually anti-Christian.

Methodism has always believed in progress both within itself and for the whole Church and the world. The movement was a gradual growth through adjustment; it took shape under the hand of Providence, as it endeavored to meet the conditions which arose within itself and by which it was surrounded. The Methodist Church is a providential product. No man said, "Go to now, let us make a Church." In fact, it did not desire to become a Church, its object being rather to quicken the spiritual life of all the Churches; and an enormous change took place in its life and growth when it did become a Church. The step was taken in the

face of the strong opposition of many, including Charles Wesley, and not until it was thrust out into this new path by the force of circumstances. John Wesley did not desire to separate from the Church of England, and he held the movement to it as long as possible, longer probably than for its good. But his whole soul was bent upon serving the cause of pure religion, and when the colonies became an independent nation, he sanctioned the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America and gave it an ordained ministry, because he saw no other way to care for "these poor sheep in the wilderness." When his brother Charles warned him that this course would probably lead to an independent Church in England, he replied, "I must and will save as many souls as I can while I live, without being careful about what may *possibly be* when I die."

The Methodists in the colonies were just as anxious to remain societies in connection with Wesley and the mother country. At the Conference in Baltimore in 1780—right in the midst of the War of the Revolution—the question was asked, "Shall we continue in close connection with the Church and press our people to a closer communion with her?" The answer was, "Yes." This was followed by another question, "Will this Conference grant the privilege to all friendly clergy of the Church of England, at the request or desire of the people, to preach or administer the ordinances in our preaching houses or chapels?" The answer to this question also was, "Yes." But four years later the Conference, meeting at the same place, made the mar-

velous change from a religious society to a wholly independent Church—not because anybody designed it, but because they were under the guidance of Providence. "In the year of our Lord 1785, and in the ninth year of the independence of the United States," wrote one of the members of this famous Christmas Conference, "we thought it not robbery to call our society a Church."

Methodism started out with the determination to face all questions frankly and meet all conditions bravely, with nothing but the fear of God before its eyes. Among the things that Wesley presented to the first Conference as to be "desired" were these: "That every point which is proposed may be examined to the foundation; that every person may speak freely whatever is in his heart; and that every question which may arise should be thoroughly debated and settled." Following these words, as they are recorded in the Minutes, there is the inevitable question, with the answer: "*Q.* Need we be fearful of doing this? What are we afraid of? Of overturning our first principles? *A.* If they are false, the sooner they are overturned the better. If they are true, they will bear the strictest examination." Under this charter of Christian liberty Methodists have always felt free to examine their doctrines and practices in the light of information received from any source, and they have been just as free to give expression to their own conclusions and convictions. The law against disseminating doctrines contrary to our Articles of Religion has never been construed as forbidding an interpretation of these

articles in the terms of thought familiar to each generation or as removing them from honest and respectful consideration. The General Conference of 1828 declared by resolution that the rule in the Discipline is "designed solely to guard against any mischievous and false brethren who may ungratefully avail themselves of their place in the bosom of the Church to endeavor to sow dissensions by inveighing against our doctrine or discipline."

Wesley had no patience with the pessimistic cry that the world is getting worse all the time and that it is useless to try to make it any better. He believed in a glorious future for the Church and for humanity, because he believed in God and in the power of the gospel. A sermon of his, entitled, "Of Former Times," is based on the verse in Ecclesiastes which reads: "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." He calls attention to the fact that it is generally supposed that "we now live in the dregs of time, when the world is, as it were, grown old, and consequently that everything in it is in a declining state." Men in other ages were supposed to be taller, wiser, and more virtuous than now, "so that, at length, they have fallen from the golden into the iron age, and now justice is fled from the earth." He quotes Virgil as writing, nearly two thousand years ago, "Scarce twelve strong men the ponderous mass could raise, such as disgrace these dark degenerate days"; and Homer as saying a thousand years before that early time that one of his heroes threw a stone which "hard-

ly ten men could lift—such as men are now." He cites a passage from another Roman poet, which reads: "The age of our parents was more vicious than that of our grandfathers; our age is more vicious than that of our fathers; we are worse than our fathers were, and our children will be worse than we." All of which is "awful"—if true.

But Wesley says it is not true. "Upon cool and impartial examination," he writes, "it will appear that the former days were not better than these; yea, on the contrary, that these are, in many respects, beyond comparison better than they." After referring to many facts which tend to prove his point, he begins his closing paragraph as follows: "Shall we now say, 'The former days were better than these'? God forbid that we should be so unwise and so unthankful! Nay, rather, let us praise him all the day long; for he hath dealt bountifully with us. No 'former time,' since the apostles left the earth, has been better than the present. None has been comparable to it in several respects." One of his paragraphs is especially pertinent now, in view of a threatened recurrence of the age of intolerance:

To affirm this, therefore, as commonly as it is done, is not only contrary to truth, but is an instance of black ingratitude to God and a grievous affront to his blessed Spirit. For whoever makes a fair and candid inquiry will easily perceive that true religion has in no wise decreased, but greatly increased, in the present century. To instance in one capital branch of religion, the love of our neighbor. Is not persecution well-nigh vanished from the face of the earth? In what age did Christians of every denomination show such forbearance toward each other? When

before was such lenity shown by governors to their respective subjects? Not only in Great Britain and Ireland, but in France and Germany; yea, every part of Europe? Nothing like this has been seen since the time of Constantine; no, not since the time of the apostles.

Charles Wesley sang, "To serve the present age," John Wesley put it into practice. The younger brother got married, ceased to itinerate, and shrank from the radical application of the principles of Methodism; the elder got married, at forty-seven, but did not allow marriage or anything else to interfere with his "care for the Churches." "I do not see," he said, "how any preacher can allow marriage to cause him to travel one mile less or to preach one less sermon." He found later, however, that this was not as easy to do as he had at first supposed. But in spite of his wife's complaints, in spite of the infirmities of the flesh, in spite of opposition from many quarters, he held resolutely to his task, using his judgment and common sense and looking to God for guidance in all things. In the face of an inbred conservatism, which inclined him to walk in familiar ways, he adopted innovation after innovation in order that he might enter every open door. When eight or ten persons came to him for spiritual help, he was led to organize a religious society with principles such as no such organization had ever adopted before; when he learned that thousands were gathering at the coal mines and in the fields to hear preaching, he left the quiet precincts of the sanctuary and began to preach in the great outdoors; when he found that converts needed more pastoral oversight than he could

give them, he organized them into classes, putting each class under a leader; when certain men without training or ordination felt a call to preach, he sent them out as lay preachers; when it became necessary to raise funds, he established the office of steward. Each of these steps he took without ecclesiastical precedent or sanction, and he took them because they became necessary through the orderly growth of the movement.

John Richard Green, a clergyman of the Established Church, wrote appreciatively of the Methodist movement in his "History of the English People." He refers to it as a revival, "which changed after a time the whole tone of English society," restoring the Church to life and activity, purifying literature and manners, ushering in a new era of philanthropy, and giving the first impulse to popular education. Of John Wesley he says:

> No man ever stood at the head of a great revolution whose temper was so anti-revolutionary. In his earlier days the bishops had been forced to rebuke him for the narrowness and intolerance of his Churchmanship. When Whitefield began his sermons in the fields, Wesley "could not at first reconcile himself to that strange way." He condemned and fought against the admission of laymen as preachers till he found himself left with none but laymen to preach. To the last he clung passionately to the Church of England and looked on the body he had formed as but a lay society in full communion with it. He broke with the Moravians, who had been the earliest friends of the new movement, when they endangered its safe conduct by their contempt of religious forms. He broke with Whitefield when the great preacher plunged into an extravagant Calvinism. But the same practical temper of mind which led him to reject what was unmeasured, and to be the last to adopt what was new, enabled him at once to grasp and organize the novelties he adopted.

Methodism as organized into a Church took shape through the normal working of its own inner principle, and not through deference to tradition or precedent. In answer to the needs of the hour it created offices and officers such as the world had never before seen in any time or land, and it found its justification in the fundamental law of life which demands that an organism shall fashion its tools to meet the conditions of a changing environment. In reply to the reproach that its form is of yesterday, while the organization of Rome is hoary with antiquity, it notes the fact that living beings change from year to year, while mummies remain the same. When Wesley saw that the Church in America needed supervision he ordained a superintendent or bishop, who was elected to office by the newly organized body. That is to say, when the Methodist Church needed bishops, it simply created them according to the need. And they were such bishops as no Church had ever had until that time. Both Wesley and the Conference seemed to be in doubt whether they should be called bishop or superintendent. Wesley uses the word "superintendent" in the ordination papers of Dr. Coke, and the first Conference follows his example. And though the minutes of the Conference of a year or two later used the word "bishop" without drawing from him a word of rebuke, a letter to Asbury shows that he was by no means certain that the word of so much unsavory association should come into Methodist usage. "How can you, how dare you," he exclaims, "suffer yourself to be called bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call

me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never by my consent call me *bishop*. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this!"

However, it is hardly necessary to say that Wesley had in mind the abuses of the word which had crept into it through the teaching of some of the Ante-Nicene Fathers that the bishops constitute the Church and through the spurious claim of apostolical succession put forth by Roman Catholics and some Anglicans, and not the New Testament significance of the word. And though American Methodism has retained the word, it has stripped it of all hierarchical and sacerdotal meaning and made it to signify an office in the Church of God, created for the sake of efficiency. Methodist episcopacy is not a New Testament order, divinely revealed as a necessary part of organized Christianity; it owes its existence to the constitution of Episcopal Methodism. The General Conference cannot "change or alter any part or rule of our government, so as to do away episcopacy, or destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency." But it can, and does, lay down conditions under which the bishops must do their work, and it can change these conditions from time to time as circumstances may indicate the need for change. The law of the Church has always made it the duty of the bishop to fix the appointments of the preachers, but the General Conference of 1910 provided "that he shall announce to the open cabinet, before the minute question answering the appointments of the preachers is officially announced, all the appoint-

ments made by him except those made during the interim of the sessions of an Annual Conference." The question, how far the General Conference may go without transcending its prescribed bounds, is a debatable one, but in Methodism the episcopacy is a creature of the Church and not a self-perpetuating institution. The office may be limited, modified, or abolished through constitutional process. It stands or falls according to its usefulness.

Methodism is, therefore, happily spared the pains of establishing the "fable" of apostolical succession, which has encouraged bigotry and arrogance and led to a misunderstanding of the gospel. In his "History of Methodism," Bishop McTyeire says:

> That such a theory of the ministry finds any acceptance is because certain principles of human nature favor it. It pleases the "clergy," for it invests them with a mysterious power, an awful sanctity; and this gives them importance apart from moral character and mental ability. The same principle long kept the heathen oracles in credit. It is a pleasing fancy for the people—this getting something, tangibly, by a direct line from the apostles! The idea of an unbroken chain of ordained persons is readily taken in, and that some special virtue must attach to their ministrations is admitted with unthinking facility. . . . Fortunately American Methodism has no such evil inheritance as this fancied "succession" carries in its very nature; for it seems to be inevitably corrupting to Protestantism. It is a leaven that works, wherever lodged, and prevails sooner or later. Like the interdicted omer of manna which "bred worms and stank"—like the brazen serpent that Israel burned incense to and the reforming king broke in pieces and put away as *nehushtan*—so is the claim of "succession," upon whatever historical pretense.

Methodism not only created a new kind of bishop; it also made the presiding elder—an officer unlike any in the New Testament or in all Church history. Through this office, a bishop, elected for life, has for his assistant a sub-bishop, who is selected and appointed for one year. And yet, though there was no precedent for it in Church or Scripture, the presiding eldership arose through the necessities of the hour, and no provision of Methodism for doing its work efficiently has more fully justified itself than this office.

The secret of the success of the Methodist Church lies—next to the purity of its doctrine—in the fact that it has kept itself mobile and adjustable. Beginning as a revival movement under the direction of one man, it was established in democratic America as a Church of preachers. To this extent it was in line with Roman Catholicism, for it is the theory of that Church that the Church is essentially the priesthood. The layman has no voice in defining doctrine or making laws, his only duty being to accept the definitions of the priesthood and to submit to the requirements laid upon him. The one hundred and twenty-nine men who created the General Conference in 1808 were all preachers. It was their theory that all law-making power was lodged in the ministry. The Church was owned by the preachers, who composed the Annual Conferences. But in course of time the radical step was taken of admitting laymen to the law-making body of the Church in equal numbers with the preachers, and in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, laymen have also been given a place in the Annual Conferences. An

equally significant change took place when women were given all the rights of the laymen.

Methodism keeps constantly in view the spread of pure, personal religion and subordinates the form of organization to the object to be attained. From the beginning it has appealed to experience, and consequently it was not more at home in the eighteenth century than it is in the twentieth. By making experience the criterion of truth, instead of tradition, it has been able to keep pace with progress and to appropriate the best thought of the age without violation of its established principles. It does not look with disapproving or suspicious eye upon the effort of the historian to uncover the past or of the scientist to reveal the secrets of the natural world. The idea of progress is congenial to the Methodist mind. Methodism believes that Jesus Christ is in the stream of this mighty modern time, that he rides its flood and controls it for good. It does not feel that it must remain apart in utter isolation, but, like the gulf stream, it flows upon the bosom of the great ocean of human interest and mingles its warm waters with the whole current of human aspiration. Its attitude to the whole of life is akin to that of the present to the past, as described by Ernst Troeltsch in his chapter on "The Modern World":*

> The modern world possesses a wealth of knowledge which no doubt connects with the heritage derived from antiquity, and especially with the stronger emphasis laid on this at the so-called Renaissance; but it, nevertheless, starting from the vantage

*"Protestantism and Progress," G. P. Putnam's Sons, publishers, New York.

ground of an infinitely wider experience, goes far beyond this inherited knowledge and its categories of thought, possessing quite a new grasp of reality, and it has before it in the future a task to which no limits can be set. Moreover, this knowledge has become, through popular education and the printing press, a really practical power, an aid in the struggle for existence available for every one. In the department of natural science it has rationalized nature to an extent and degree which justify us in speaking of a real domination of nature by spirit, and enables the practical arts, freed from empirical and unintelligent routine and resting upon the knowledge of natural law, to advance by incessant new invention and further development. In the department of historical science it has so fully and thoroughly worked out the genesis of our civilization, and has so made all present conditions intelligible by tracing the history of their development, that all thinking is obliged to become in some measure historical, and that this knowledge is an essential part of the equipment of all attempts to modify our present conditions. The consequence of all this is, of course, a certain Relativism, a mental complexity, and the possession of a wealth of analogies for all kinds of comparison such as no other period has ever known. At the same time, however, a strong sense of continuity prevents any paralyzing effect from resulting, and the idea of original tasks belonging to the present age does not die out. The conception of ourselves as the heirs of a great historical whole, to which we have to contribute, stimulates energy and teaches us to use the experiences of the past and to regard the future as the offspring of the present, for which we are responsible to our successors.

Any man who has lived for half a century knows that changes have come about in the Methodist Church. The tone of the pulpit, the relation of the pastor to the people, and the methods of revival and other kinds of work are not the same as they were when he was a boy. He may deplore the change, but it is a fact which he

cannot fail to observe. And what has been taking place in the last generation is what has been going on from the beginning of Methodist history, for Methodism has produced a growing Church in a changing world. Nothing in the world can remain exactly the same from age to age. The claim that Rome never changes is a fiction that can be disproved by a comparison of any century with any preceding century in its history. It changes slowly and reluctantly, but it does change. No modern pope would reinstate the rack and thumbscrew or approve a general massacre. The tone of preaching and writing in the Roman Catholic Church is not the same as it was five hundred years ago, and it no longer teaches that all Protestants are doomed to perdition. It may assert that its doctrines all go back to the apostles or, as some say, to God's revelation of the truth to Adam in the garden of Eden, but every intelligent person knows that the doctrine of papal infallibility, which is the corner stone of the whole structure, was wholly unknown to the apostles and did not become a law of the Church until 1870. Great changes have also come about in the preaching of other Churches. Baptists no longer claim that immersion is necessary to salvation, and there is no community so ignorant as to tolerate the assertion that "there are infants in hell not a span long."

One change in Methodism is not unlike that which took place in the ancient Church, when it learned to attach less and less importance to unusual psychological manifestations and to look for the evidence of the genuineness of a Christian experience in the moral and

spiritual effects of faith upon life and conduct. The Corinthians thought that the most certain evidence of the presence of God among them was their ability to speak with tongues, and Paul had to tell them that it was better to utter five intelligible words than ten thousand ecstatic exclamations, and that the greatest of all gifts was love. In the early days of Methodism unusual and remarkable "experiences" were highly prized, especially a conversion which instantaneously snatched a man from the lowest depths of misery and despair to the loftiest heights of joy and ecstasy, and shouting was considered by many as a great virtue. But the Church has learned that Christian experience is not so much concentrated in one blissful moment as spread out through the whole life of a person who is devoted to God. All that the Christian enjoys or endures in fellowship with God—the whole of his life—is Christian experience. There was once a strong tendency toward believing that a man could not be converted except at a certain place and in a certain way. About a quarter of a century ago, when some preachers began to assert that it was not necessary to "go to the mourner's bench" in the Church and cry in order to be saved, but that a person could be saved anywhere and that crying was not an essential part of the experience, many shook their heads in disapproval and declared that they had no confidence in dry-eyed religion. And yet John Wesley had said long ago that the emotional accompaniment of conversion was only incidental, and the "mourner's bench" did not come into use until several years after the beginning of Methodism.

Perhaps the greatest of all changes has taken place in the method of the Methodist Church, and of all Churches for that matter, in dealing with children. In the early days, people generally were still under the dominance of the Calvinistic conception of child nature and this necessarily determined their ideas as to child religion. The most pathetic chapter in Methodist history is the record of the effort to lead every child into an adult religious experience. The child was thought to be in imminent peril until it had a great soul upheaval, and when conversion took place all childish things had to be put away and the life given up to the enjoyment of religious services and a longing to go to heaven. The rules of Wesley's school at Kingswood provided for everything except play. And Methodism was not alone in holding such views. When Campbell Morgan announced the words, "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof," as his text for a commencement sermon a few years ago, he said, "If my articulation were not clear, you might have thought that I read, 'praying,' instead of 'playing.'" But the Church has learned that it is as natural for children to play as it is for grown people to work, and that there is a religious experience proper to childhood, which is as genuine and precious as the religious experience of the adult.

Another change has also taken place in a modification of the asceticism which came along with all the good that was appropriated from Puritanism. John Wesley was so completely absorbed in the great work to which he had been called that he could not see how anybody

could spend a moment of precious time in amusement or recreation. He believed that every man should "redeem the time" by giving every hour to profitable work. He regarded everything that gratified the desire for beauty as fostering a "love of the world." Parents ruin their children when "they feed in them 'the desire of the eyes,' the propensity to seek happiness in pleasing the imagination, by giving them pretty playthings, glittering toys, shining buckles or buttons, fine clothes, red shoes, laced hats, needless ornaments, as ribands, necklaces, ruffles." A wise mother will give her child "nothing that can attract the eye." What a drab world! Any man that ever had a pair of copper-toed boots in childhood will get a thrill out of the recollection of it till his dying day. And he knows that that pair of boots did not imperil his immortal soul.

Early Methodists were plain. One of the first controversies was over the introduction of an organ into the house of worship. Some of the great leaders feared that the organ marked the beginning of the end of the movement, because it showed that "Methodists were putting on style." The chapels or churches had a "men's side" and a "women's side," and woe to the man or woman that recklessly disregarded this rule of decorum and sat in a place intended for the opposite sex. Even now, a man occasionally finds himself embarrassed in the expression of his devotion when sitting by the side of his wife! The question of amusements did not vex the fathers, because there was an easy solution. Any game of any kind was simply "verboten." But for better or for worse, the Methodist

Church has changed its attitude toward recreation. It is teaching its children to play, and guiding the young people in their sports, and providing them with books that give directions for games.

The changes in Methodism are also seen in its divisions. And these changes also meant progress. Some of them came about through a desire to preserve individual freedom and responsibility, which were threatened by the tendency toward tyrannical oppression that almost always develops in a powerful organization; others became necessary for the sake of self-preservation and efficiency. The division of the Church into two great branches in the United States came about through historical necessity. The New England preachers could not hold themselves and their congregations to a Church that countenanced slavery, while the Southern delegates in the General Conference of 1844 knew that, if Bishop Andrew lost his position in the episcopacy because of his connection with the institution, "they might as well go to the Rocky Mountains as to their own sunny plains." Progress is also seen in the tendency of Methodism to unite. All the various branches in Australia have come together in one body; in the mother country several merged to compose the United Methodist Church, and the three divisions now in existence have voted a union, which will be put into effect as soon as practicable; and the Canadian branches, which united several years ago, have recently joined the Congregationalists and Presbyterians in forming the United Church of Canada. As there was the pressure of historical necessity behind the

divisions, the pressure of the same kind of necessity is behind the movement to unite. Sorely pressed by the world on the one side and by a compact and aggressive Catholicism on the other, not only Methodism, but the whole of Protestantism, is beginning to awake to the necessity for uniting its forces. Hugh Price Hughes said, "Protestantism is a mob!" The task ahead of organized religion is so gigantic that it cannot be accomplished by any one Church, or even by all Churches working without concerted plan and action.

Dr. George W. Richards remarks in his book on "Christian Ways of Salvation":* "The evangelical Churches of the United States are still largely bound by the confessional orthodoxy and the ecclesiasticism of the seventeenth century." He seems not to have considered Methodism. After referring to the "five points" of the Presbyterian General Assembly, as an indication of denominational narrowness, he adds that "closer examination will convince one that the position of the Presbyterian Churches is held, in one form or another, by all the Protestant Churches, though not by all Protestants." "The Baptists consider baptism by immersion, the Episcopalians apostolic succession and ordination by bishops, the Lutherans their doctrine of the Lord's Supper, as essential and necessary." "Which of these Churches," he asks, "would Paul join, were he to return to the earth? and which has found the way of salvation?" Fortunately, the returning apostle would not be shut up to that alternative; he

*The Macmillan Company, publishers, New York.

could become a Methodist! Dr. Richards does not say what particular fetish the Methodists worship; and for a very good reason—they haven't any. The Doctor also quotes from an article in the *Presbyterian*, in which the writer says that the Westminster Confession is not "a purely denominational affair to those who believe it to be true," and that "those who believe it to be true will never be satisfied until it has been accepted by the whole world," and remarks:

> Jesus marveled at the faith of the centurion; what would he do at the naïve credulity of the Princeton professor? While this condition prevails, to talk of Church union is a mere waste of words; to attempt to reconcile Christianity and modern culture is a futile task. To expect to keep the rising generations, who are taught the results of science and trained to think of the universe in a scientific way, true to outworn traditions of the Church is to ignore the requirements of reason and conscience. Clearly there is a great task before the Protestant ministers and teachers. That task is to show men the Evangelical Way of Salvation.

But that is just what Methodism is out to do. Its great desire is not to preserve itself as an organization; it is not even wedded to the name; its sole purpose is to save the world. And for the accomplishment of this great end it desires to coöperate with every other agency that has the same aim and to follow as the Spirit leads into whatever form of organization the great Church of the future should take. Bishop Tigert spoke as a true Methodist when he said: "Some Churches will allow me to commune with them, but will not allow me to preach for them; others will allow me to preach for them, but will not allow me to com-

mune with them. I will preach for the Baptists, when they invite me to preach, and I will commune with the Episcopalians, when they invite me to commune." We do not expect everybody to become a Methodist, but we do expect the Methodist interpretation of Christianity as a religion of experienced salvation to pervade all Churches and spread throughout the world.

In the brief Preface to his epoch-making work which appeared about a quarter of a century ago, Auguste Sabatier wrote these words:

> Two systems of theology still confront one another: the theology of authority and the theology of experience. They are characterized by methods radically opposed in the scientific development of religious ideas and Christian dogmas. To the solution of the question of method the present work is consecrated. At the present hour one method is dying and destined soon to disappear; the other is taking on ever more vigorous development and is destined to triumph.

The famous Dean of the Protestant Faculty of Theology in the University of Paris did not live to see his great book on "Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit" go into the hands of the printer, but he knew its importance and told his wife a short time before his death that "it must come out *whatever happens.*" Two systems still face each other. The mighty exponent of one is Roman Catholicism; the organized expression of the other is Methodism.